THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG 1863 (3)

The Third Day

TIMOTHY J. ORR

ILLUSTRATED BY STEVE NOON

CAMPAIGN 403

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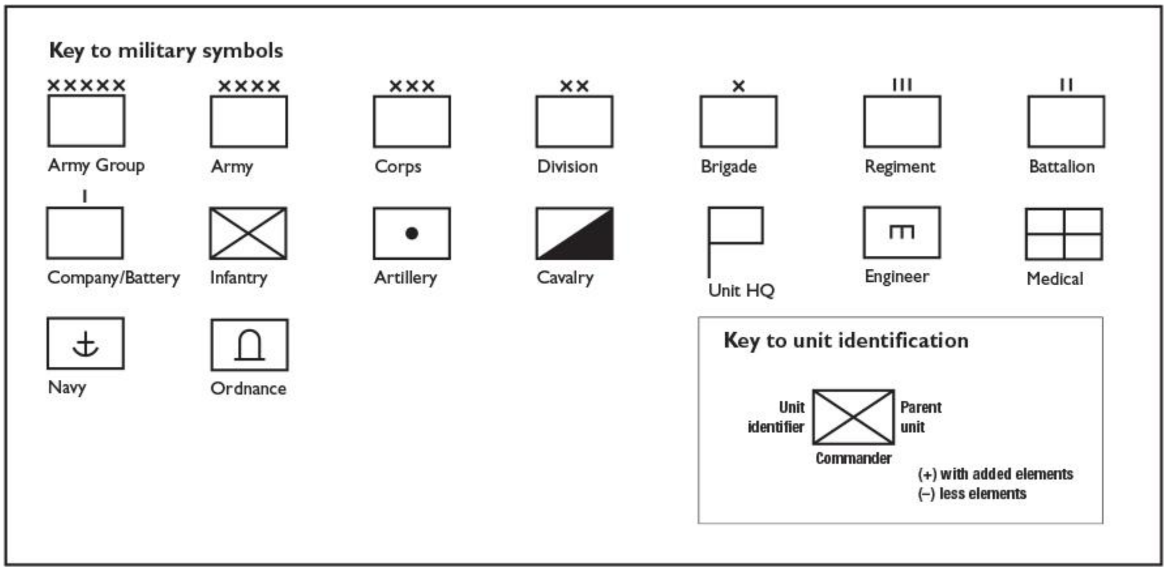
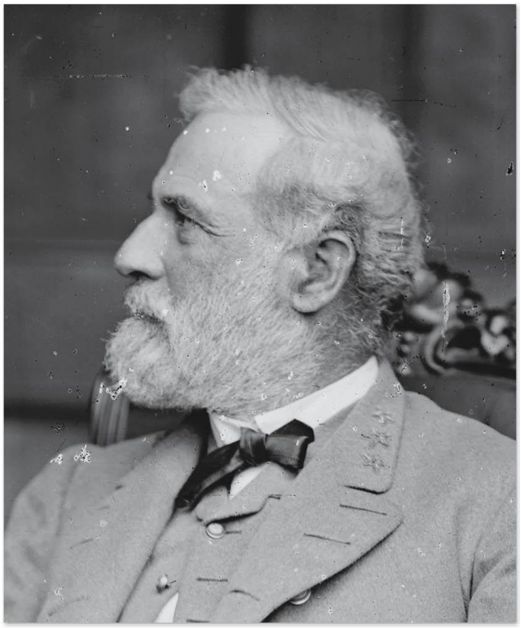

Key to military symbols
XXXXX
Army Group
XXXX
Army
XXX
Corps
XX
Division
X
Brigade
III
Regiment
II
Battalion
I
Company/Battery
Infantry
Artillery
Cavalry
Unit HQ
Engineer
Medical
Navy
Ordnance
Key to unit identification
Unit identifier
Parent unit
Commander
(+) with added elements
(–) less elements

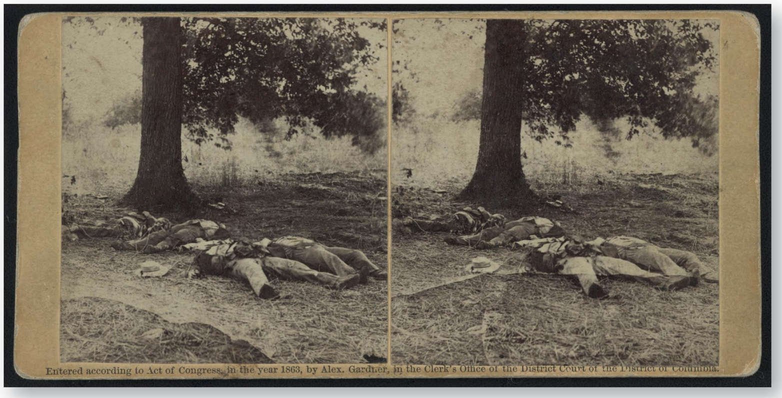
END OF DAY TWO

On July 1, 1863, two armies clashed north and west of Gettysburg. Gen. Robert E. Lee, the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, had not expected this fight. The previous day, he had sent orders to his corps commanders allowing them to use Gettysburg as a location to concentrate his army's infantry, but he warned two of them—Lieut. Gen. Richard Ewell and Lieut. Gen. A. P. Hill—not to bring on a general engagement. Disregarding Lee's advice, both Ewell and Hill attacked Union forces when they came into view. Around 7.00 a.m., some of Hill's men encountered skirmishers belonging to Brig. Gen. John Buford's Union cavalry division. Hill engaged, pushing the Union skirmishers back to the edge of town. But then, half a mile from the town, the cavalry gave way and Union infantry took up the fight. A sharp, hour-long engagement occurred, halting Hill's advance. At midday, Ewell arrived with his corps, and he, likewise, began an attack, later claiming that it had been necessary to come to Hill's assistance. Lee arrived about the same time, frustrated that his corps commanders had commenced a battle without his consent. But when he assessed the situation, Lee determined that his men stood a chance at winning the field, but only if he committed all available troops to the effort. In the afternoon, Lee ordered a general assault.



From his headquarters near the Thompson house, Gen. Robert E. Lee planned to renew the attack against the Union line at dawn on July 3, 1863. “The general plan was unchanged,” he later wrote. Lee expected Longstreet’s corps to attack the Union left while Ewell’s corps simultaneously engaged the Union right—the same scheme as the previous day. The results from July 2 convinced Lee that, with renewed efforts made in the same areas, “we should ultimately succeed.” (Library of Congress)

By the end of Day One, Lee’s men had driven two Union corps from their defensive positions, chasing them through the town. As daylight faded, the Union troops rallied atop two hills on the southern edge of the borough. Also, two additional Union corps arrived, bolstering the Army of the Potomac’s defenses. At midnight, the new army commander, Maj. Gen. George G. Meade, who had monitored operations from Taneytown, Maryland, arrived on the field and took charge. During the overnight hours, Meade supervised the establishment of a new defensive line, which, by morning, July 2, covered three miles of territory. Lee’s next wave of attacks came late in the day. At 4.00 p.m., using three fresh divisions, Lee launched an attack against the Union left flank. Although this assault routed the Union army’s 3rd Corps, three other Union corps closed up the breach, repelling the Confederates. At 8.00 p.m., two more Confederate divisions attacked the Union right flank. Although this assault captured a quarter-mile of Union earthworks on the slopes of Culp’s Hill, it also stopped short of success. The Union line remained unmoved.


Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1863, by Alex. Gardner, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Columbia.

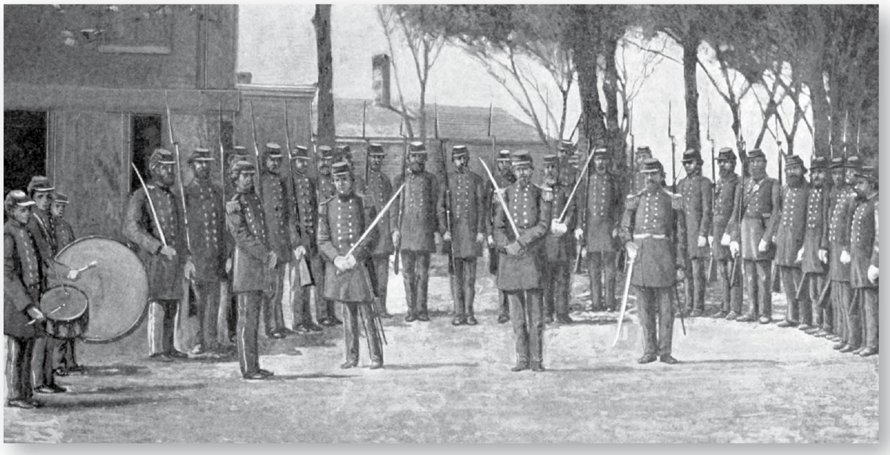
After two days, over 33,100 soldiers had been killed, wounded, or captured (approximately 12,600 Confederate and 20,500 Union). Because combat operations went on unceasingly, by the beginning of the third day, the majority of the dead had yet to be buried. The Confederate soldiers pictured here were likely killed by Union artillery fire on July 2. (Library of Congress)

By the end of July 2, the majority of the Army of the Potomac had arrived on the field. This photograph depicts one of the last units to arrive, a company of soldiers belonging to the 139th Pennsylvania. Along with the rest of the 6th Corps, this regiment reached the field after completing a thirty-two-mile march from Manchester, Maryland. It engaged in combat on July 2 and 3 near the Rose wheat field, losing one killed and nineteen wounded. (Library of Congress)

In two days, Lee’s army had sustained about 12,600 losses, more than seventeen percent of its total. During the same period, Meade’s army had sustained 20,585 losses, or twenty-three percent. As the shades of night closed the fighting on July 2, both armies lay in agony, with wounded men overflowing dozens of makeshift field hospitals. Meanwhile, thousands of dead and dying were caught in the no man’s land in between the armies. The unwounded knew that the battle had not yet been decided. They assumed the fighting would last another day. On the night of July 2, a Union officer in the 5th Corps wrote:

> It is indeed remarkable that men can lie down and sleep so tranquilly when they know the danger that awaits them on the morrow, when they hear the cries of the already mangled, when they know that the dead lie strewn around and that with the early dawn of the coming day, the work of death will be resumed as all felt it would surely be.

What did the generals have in store for July 3?



This prewar image depicts the officers and men of the Duplin Rifles, a militia unit that became Company A, 43rd North Carolina. It had participated in the battle’s first day and again on July 3. By battle’s end, the 43rd North Carolina had sustained twenty-one killed and 126 wounded out of a roster of 572 officers and men. (Public domain)

ORDERS OF BATTLE

Army of Northern Virginia

General Robert E. Lee

Escort
  39th Virginia Cavalry Battalion (two companies)
Imboden's Independent Command (Brig. Gen. John D. Imboden)
  18th Virginia Cavalry
  62nd Virginia Cavalry
  McNeill's Partisan Rangers (one company)
  Staunton Battery

Stuart's Cavalry Division (Maj. Gen. James E. B. Stuart)

Hampton's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Wade Hampton, wounded on July 3; Col. Laurence S. Baker)
  1st North Carolina Cavalry
  1st South Carolina Cavalry
  2nd South Carolina Cavalry
  Cobb's Legion Cavalry
  Jeff Davis Legion Cavalry
  Phillips's Legion Cavalry
Robertson's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Beverly H. Robertson)
  4th North Carolina Cavalry
  5th North Carolina Cavalry
Fitzhugh Lee's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee)
  1st Maryland Cavalry Battalion
  1st Virginia Cavalry
  2nd Virginia Cavalry
  3rd Virginia Cavalry
  4th Virginia Cavalry
  5th Virginia Cavalry
Jenkins's Brigade (Col. Milton J. Ferguson, relinquished command on July 3; Lieut. Col. Vincent Witcher)
  14th Virginia Cavalry
  16th Virginia Cavalry
  17th Virginia Cavalry
  34th Virginia Cavalry Battalion
  36th Virginia Cavalry Battalion
  Jackson's Battery
William H. F. Lee's Brigade (Col. John R. Chambliss, Jr.)
  2nd North Carolina Cavalry
  9th Virginia Cavalry
  10th Virginia Cavalry
  13th Virginia Cavalry
Jones's Brigade (Brig. Gen. William E. Jones)
  6th Virginia Cavalry

  - 7th Virginia Cavalry
  - 11th Virginia Cavalry

Divisional Horse Artillery (Maj. Robert F. Beckham)

Breathed's Battery
  - Chew's Battery
  - Griffin's Battery
  - Hart's Battery
  - McGregor's Battery
  - Moorman's Battery

1st CORPS

Lieut. Gen. James Longstreet

McLaws's Division (Maj. Gen. Lafayette McLaws)

Kershaw's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Joseph B. Kershaw)
  - 2nd South Carolina Infantry
  - 3rd South Carolina Infantry
  - 7th South Carolina Infantry
  - 8th South Carolina Infantry
  - 15th South Carolina Infantry
  - 3rd South Carolina Battalion

Barksdale's Brigade (Col. Benjamin G. Humphreys)
  - 13th Mississippi Infantry
  - 17th Mississippi Infantry
  - 18th Mississippi Infantry
  - 21st Mississippi Infantry

Semmes's Brigade (Col. Goode Bryan)
  - 10th Georgia Infantry
  - 50th Georgia Infantry
  - 51st Georgia Infantry
  - 53rd Georgia Infantry

Wofford's Brigade (Brig. Gen. William T. Wofford)
  - 16th Georgia Infantry
  - 18th Georgia Infantry
  - 24th Georgia Infantry
  - Cobb's Legion Infantry
  - Phillips's Legion Infantry
  - 3rd Georgia Sharpshooter Battalion

Cabell's Artillery Battalion (Col. Henry C. Cabell)
  - Battery A, 1st North Carolina Light Artillery
  - Pulaski Artillery
  - 1st Richmond Howitzers
  - Troup Artillery

Pickett's Division (Maj. Gen. George E. Pickett)

Garnett's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Richard B. Garnett, killed on July 3; Maj. Charles S. Peyton)
  - 8th Virginia Infantry
  - 18th Virginia Infantry
  - 19th Virginia Infantry
  - 28th Virginia Infantry
  - 56th Virginia Infantry

Kemper’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. James L. Kemper, wounded on July 3; Col. Joseph Mayo, Jr.)
- 1st Virginia Infantry
- 3rd Virginia Infantry
- 7th Virginia Infantry
- 11th Virginia Infantry
- 24th Virginia Infantry

Armistead’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. Lewis A. Armistead, mortally wounded on July 3; Col. William R. Aylett)
- 9th Virginia Infantry
- 14th Virginia Infantry
- 38th Virginia Infantry
- 53rd Virginia Infantry
- 57th Virginia Infantry

Corse’s Brigade – joined the army on July 15 (Brig. Gen. Montgomery D. Corse)
- 15th Virginia Infantry
- 17th Virginia Infantry
- 29th Virginia Infantry
- 30th Virginia Infantry
- 32nd Virginia Infantry

Dearing’s Artillery Battalion (Maj. James Dearing)
- Fauquier Artillery
- Hampden Artillery
- Richmond Fayette Artillery
- Blount’s Battery

Hood’s Division (Brig. Gen. Evander M. Law)

Law’s Brigade (Col. James L. Sheffield)
- 4th Alabama Infantry
- 15th Alabama Infantry
- 44th Alabama Infantry
- 47th Alabama Infantry
- 48th Alabama Infantry

Robertson’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. Jerome B. Robertson)
- 3rd Arkansas Infantry
- 1st Texas Infantry
- 4th Texas Infantry
- 5th Texas Infantry

Anderson’s Brigade (Col. William W. White)
- 7th Georgia Infantry
- 8th Georgia Infantry
- 9th Georgia Infantry
- 11th Georgia Infantry
- 59th Georgia Infantry

Benning’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. Henry L. Benning)
- 2nd Georgia Infantry
- 15th Georgia Infantry
- 17th Georgia Infantry
- 20th Georgia Infantry

Henry’s Artillery Battalion
- Branch Battery
- Charleston German Artillery

- Palmetto Light Artillery
- Rowan Artillery

Artillery Reserve (Col. James B. Walton)

Alexander’s Artillery Battalion (Col. Edward P. Alexander)
- Ashland Artillery
- Bedford Artillery
- Brooks Artillery
- Madison Light Artillery
- Virginia (Richmond) Battery
- Virginia (Bath) Battery

Washington Artillery Battalion (Maj. Benjamin F. Eshleman)
- 1st Company
- 2nd Company
- 3rd Company
- 4th Company

2ND CORPS

Lieut. Gen. Richard S. Ewell

Provost Guard
- 1st North Carolina Sharpshooter Battalion

Escort
- Randolph’s Company, Virginia Cavalry

Early’s Division (Maj. Gen. Jubal A. Early)

Hays’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. Harry T. Hays)
- 5th Louisiana Infantry
- 6th Louisiana Infantry
- 7th Louisiana Infantry
- 8th Louisiana Infantry
- 9th Louisiana Infantry

Smith’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. William Smith)
- 31st Virginia Infantry
- 49th Virginia Infantry
- 52nd Virginia Infantry

Hoke’s Brigade (Col. Archibald C. Godwin)
- 6th North Carolina Infantry
- 21st North Carolina Infantry
- 57th North Carolina Infantry

Gordon’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. John B. Gordon)
- 13th Georgia Infantry
- 26th Georgia Infantry
- 31st Georgia Infantry
- 38th Georgia Infantry
- 60th Georgia Infantry
- 61st Georgia Infantry

Jones’s Artillery Battalion (Lieut. Col. Hilary P. Jones)
- Charlottesville Artillery
- Courtney Artillery
- Louisiana Guard Artillery
- Staunton Artillery

Cavalry
  35th Virginia Cavalry Battalion

Johnson's Division (Maj. Gen. Edward Johnson)

Steuart's Brigade (Brig. Gen. George H. Steuart)
  1st Maryland Infantry Battalion
  1st North Carolina Infantry
  3rd North Carolina Infantry
  10th Virginia Infantry
  23rd Virginia Infantry
  37th Virginia Infantry
Stonewall Brigade (Brig. Gen. James A. Walker)
  2nd Virginia Infantry
  4th Virginia Infantry
  5th Virginia Infantry
  27th Virginia Infantry
  33rd Virginia Infantry
Nicholls's Brigade (Col. Jesse M. Williams)
  1st Louisiana Infantry
  2nd Louisiana Infantry
  10th Louisiana Infantry
  14th Louisiana Infantry
  15th Louisiana Infantry
Jones's Brigade (Lieut. Col. Robert H. Dungan)
  21st Virginia Infantry
  25th Virginia Infantry
  42nd Virginia Infantry
  44th Virginia Infantry
  48th Virginia Infantry
  50th Virginia Infantry
Andrews's Artillery Battalion (Capt. Charles I. Raine)
  1st Maryland Battery
  Alleghany Artillery
  Chesapeake Artillery
  Lee Battery

Rodes's Division (Maj. Gen. Robert E. Rodes)

Daniel's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Junius Daniel)
  32nd North Carolina Infantry
  43rd North Carolina Infantry
  45th North Carolina Infantry
  53rd North Carolina Infantry
  2nd North Carolina Infantry Battalion
Doles's Brigade (Brig. Gen. George P. Doles)
  4th Georgia Infantry
  12th Georgia Infantry
  21st Georgia Infantry
  44th Georgia Infantry
Iverson's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Alfred Iverson, Jr.)
  5th North Carolina Infantry
  12th North Carolina Infantry
  20th North Carolina Infantry

- 23rd North Carolina Infantry

Ramseur’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. Stephen D. Ramseur)
- 2nd North Carolina Infantry
- 4th North Carolina Infantry
- 14th North Carolina Infantry
- 30th North Carolina Infantry

Rodes’s Brigade (Col. Edward A. O’Neal)
- 3rd Alabama Infantry
- 5th Alabama Infantry
- 6th Alabama Infantry
- 12th Alabama Infantry
- 26th Alabama Infantry

Carter’s Artillery Battalion (Lieut. Col. Thomas H. Carter)
- Jefferson Davis Artillery
- King William Artillery
- Morris Artillery
- Orange Artillery

Artillery Reserve (Col. J. Thompson Brown)

First Virginia Artillery Battalion (Capt. Willis J. Dance)
- 2nd Richmond Howitzers
- 3rd Richmond Howitzers
- Powhatan Artillery
- Rockbridge Artillery
- Salem Artillery

Nelson’s Artillery Battalion (Lieut. Col. William Nelson)
- Amherst Artillery
- Fluvanna Artillery
- Milledge’s Georgia Battery

3RD CORPS

Lieut. Gen. Ambrose P. Hill

Anderson’s Division (Maj. Gen. Richard H. Anderson)

Wilcox’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. Cadmus M. Wilcox)
- 8th Alabama Infantry
- 9th Alabama Infantry
- 10th Alabama Infantry
- 11th Alabama Infantry
- 14th Alabama Infantry

Mahone’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. William Mahone)
- 6th Virginia Infantry
- 12th Virginia Infantry
- 16th Virginia Infantry
- 41st Virginia Infantry
- 61st Virginia Infantry

Wright’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. Ambrose R. Wright, placed in arrest July 22; Col. Edward J. Walker, wounded on July 23; Capt. B. C. McCurry, relinquished command on July 23; Capt. Charles H. Andrews)
- 3rd Georgia Infantry
- 22nd Georgia Infantry

  - 48th Georgia Infantry
  - 2nd Georgia Infantry Battalion
- Perry’s Brigade (Col. David Lang)
  - 2nd Florida Infantry
  - 5th Florida Infantry
  - 8th Florida Infantry
- Posey’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. Carnot Posey)
  - 12th Mississippi Infantry
  - 16th Mississippi Infantry
  - 19th Mississippi Infantry
  - 48th Mississippi Infantry
- Cutts’s Artillery Battalion (Maj. John Lane)
  - Company A
  - Company B
  - Company C

Heth’s Division (Brig. Gen. James J. Pettigrew, resumed brigade command on July 7; Maj. Gen. Henry Heth)

- Pettigrew’s Brigade (Col. James K. Marshall, killed on July 3; Maj. John T. Jones, resumed regimental command on July 7; Brig. Gen. James J. Pettigrew, mortally wounded on July 14; Maj. John T. Jones)
  - 11th North Carolina Infantry
  - 26th North Carolina Infantry
  - 47th North Carolina Infantry
  - 52nd North Carolina Infantry
- Heth’s Brigade (Col. John M. Brockenbrough)
  - 40th Virginia Infantry
  - 47th Virginia Infantry
  - 55th Virginia Infantry
  - 22nd Virginia Infantry Battalion
- Archer’s Brigade (Col. Birkett D. Fry, wounded on July 3; Lieut. Col. Samuel G. Shepard)
  - 13th Alabama Infantry
  - 5th Alabama Infantry Battalion
  - 1st Tennessee Infantry (1st Regiment, C.S. Provisional Army)
  - 7th Tennessee Infantry
  - 14th Tennessee Infantry
- Davis’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. Joseph R. Davis)
  - 2nd Mississippi Infantry
  - 11th Mississippi Infantry
  - 42nd Mississippi Infantry
  - 55th North Carolina Infantry
- Garnett’s Artillery Battalion (Lieut. Col. John J. Garnett)
  - Donaldsonville Artillery
  - Huger Artillery
  - Lewis Artillery
  - Norfolk Blues Artillery

Pender’s Division (Brig. Gen. James H. Lane, resumed brigade command on July 3; Maj. Gen. Isaac R. Trimble, wounded on July 3; Brig. Gen. James H. Lane)

- McGowan’s Brigade (Col. Abner M. Perrin)
  - 1st South Carolina Infantry (1st Regiment, C.S. Provisional Army)
  - 1st South Carolina Rifles

  12th South Carolina Infantry
  13th South Carolina Infantry
  14th South Carolina Infantry
Lane’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. James H. Lane, assumed divisional command on July 3; Col. Clark M. Avery)
  7th North Carolina Infantry
  18th North Carolina Infantry
  28th North Carolina Infantry
  33rd North Carolina Infantry
  37th North Carolina Infantry
Thomas’s Brigade (Brig. Gen. Edward L. Thomas)
  14th Georgia Infantry
  35th Georgia Infantry
  45th Georgia Infantry
  49th Georgia Infantry
Scales’s Brigade (Col. William L. J. Lowrance)
  13th North Carolina Infantry
  16th North Carolina Infantry
  22nd North Carolina Infantry
  34th North Carolina Infantry
  38th North Carolina Infantry
Poague’s Artillery Battalion (Maj. William T. Poague)
  Albemarle Artillery
  Charlotte Artillery
  Madison Artillery
  Brooke’s Virginia Battery
Artillery Reserve (Col. Reuben L. Walker)
McIntosh’s Artillery Battalion (Maj. David G. McIntosh)
  Danville Artillery
  Hardaway Artillery
  2nd Rockbridge Artillery
  Johnson’s Virginia Battery
Pegram’s Artillery Battalion (Maj. William R. J. Pegram)
  Crenshaw Battery
  Fredericksburg Artillery
  Letcher Artillery
  Pee Dee Artillery
  Purcell Artillery

ARMY OF THE POTOMAC

Maj. Gen. George G. Meade; Maj. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock, acting Left Wing Commander, July 3, wounded on July 3;
Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum, acting Right Wing Commander, July 3
Provost Brigade (Brig. Gen. Marsena R. Patrick)
  93rd New York Infantry
  8th United States Infantry (eight companies)
  2nd Pennsylvania Cavalry
  6th Pennsylvania Cavalry (two companies)

Escort
  Oneida Cavalry (one company)
Engineer Brigade (Brig. Gen. Henry W. Benham)
  15th New York Engineers (three companies)
  50th New York Engineers
  U.S. Engineer Battalion

Artillery Reserve (Brig. Gen. Robert O. Tyler)

Headquarters Guard
  32nd Massachusetts Infantry (one company)
Train Guard
  4th New Jersey Infantry (seven companies)
1st Regular Brigade (Capt. Dunbar R. Ransom)
  Battery H, 1st United States Light Artillery
  Batteries F and K, 3rd United States Artillery
  Battery C, 4th United States Light Artillery
  Battery C, 5th United States Light Artillery
1st Volunteer Brigade (Lieut. Col. Freeman McGilvery)
  5th Massachusetts Light Artillery and 10th New York Light Artillery (consolidated)
  9th Massachusetts Light Artillery
  15th New York Light Artillery
  Independent Batteries C and Battery F, Pennsylvania Light Artillery (consolidated)
2nd Volunteer Brigade (Capt. Elijah D. Taft)
  Battery B, 1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery
  Battery M, 1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery
  2nd Connecticut Light Artillery
  5th New York Light Artillery
3rd Volunteer Brigade (Capt. James F. Huntington)
  1st New Hampshire Light Artillery
  Battery H, 1st Ohio Light Artillery
  Batteries F and G, 1st Pennsylvania Light Artillery
  Battery C, West Virginia Light Artillery
4th Volunteer Brigade (Capt. Robert H. Fitzhugh)
  6th Maine Light Artillery
  Battery A, Maryland Light Artillery
  1st New Jersey Light Artillery
  Battery G, 1st New York Light Artillery
  Battery K, 1st New York Light Artillery and 11th New York Battery (consolidated)

CAVALRY CORPS

Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton

1st Brigade, Horse Artillery (Capt. James M. Robertson)
  9th Michigan Battery
  6th New York Battery
  Batteries B and L, 2nd United States Light Artillery
  Battery M, 2nd United States Light Artillery
  Battery E, 4th United States Light Artillery
2nd Brigade, Horse Artillery (Capt. John C. Tidball)
  Batteries E and G, 1st United States Light Artillery
  Battery K, 1st United States Light Artillery

  - Battery A, 2nd United States Light Artillery

1st Division (Brig. Gen. John Buford)

- 1st Brigade (Col. William Gamble)
  - 8th Illinois Cavalry
  - 12th Illinois Cavalry (four companies)
  - 3rd Indiana Cavalry (six companies)
  - 8th New York Cavalry
- 2nd Brigade (Col. Thomas Devin)
  - 6th New York Cavalry (six companies)
  - 9th New York Cavalry
  - 17th Pennsylvania Cavalry
  - 3rd West Virginia Cavalry (two companies)
- Reserve Brigade (Brig. Gen. Wesley Merritt)
  - 6th Pennsylvania Cavalry
  - 1st United States Cavalry
  - 2nd United States Cavalry
  - 5th United States Cavalry
  - 6th United States Cavalry

2nd Division (Brig. Gen. David McM. Gregg)

- Headquarters Guard
  - 1st Ohio Cavalry (one company)
- 1st Brigade (Col. John B. McIntosh)
  - 1st Maryland Cavalry (eleven companies)
  - Purnell Legion Cavalry (one company)
  - 1st Massachusetts Cavalry
  - 1st New Jersey Cavalry
  - 1st Pennsylvania Cavalry
  - 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry
  - Battery H, 3rd Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery (one section, operating as light artillery)
- 3rd Brigade (Col. John I. Gregg)
  - 1st Maine Cavalry (ten companies)
  - 10th New York Cavalry
  - 4th Pennsylvania Cavalry
  - 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry

3rd Division (Brig. Gen. H. Judson Kilpatrick)

- Headquarters Guard
  - 1st Ohio Cavalry (one company)
- 1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Elon J. Farnsworth, killed on July 3; Col. Nathaniel P. Richmond)
  - 5th New York Cavalry
  - 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry
  - 1st Vermont Cavalry
  - 1st West Virginia Cavalry (ten companies)
- 2nd Brigade (Brig. Gen. George A. Custer)
  - 1st Michigan Cavalry
  - 5th Michigan Cavalry
  - 6th Michigan Cavalry
  - 7th Michigan Cavalry (ten companies)

1ST CORPS

Maj. Gen. John Newton
Headquarters Guard
  1st Maine Cavalry (one company)
Corps Artillery Brigade (Col. Charles S. Wainwright)
  Battery B, 2nd Maine Light Artillery
  Battery E, 5th Maine Light Artillery
  Batteries E and L, 1st New York Light Artillery
  Battery B, 1st Pennsylvania Light Artillery
  Battery B, 4th United States Light Artillery
1st Division (Brig. Gen. James S. Wadsworth)
1st Brigade (Col. William W. Robinson)
  19th Indiana Infantry
  24th Michigan Infantry
  2nd Wisconsin Infantry
  6th Wisconsin Infantry
  7th Wisconsin Infantry
2nd Brigade (Brig. Gen. Lysander Cutler)
  7th Indiana Infantry
  76th New York Infantry
  84th New York Infantry (14th Brooklyn Militia)
  95th New York Infantry
  147th New York Infantry
  56th Pennsylvania Infantry (nine companies)
2nd Division (Brig. Gen. John C. Robinson)
1st Brigade (Col. Richard Coulter)
  16th Maine Infantry
  13th Massachusetts Infantry
  94th New York Infantry
  104th New York Infantry
  107th Pennsylvania Infantry
2nd Brigade (Brig. Gen. Henry Baxter)
  12th Massachusetts Infantry
  83rd New York Infantry (9th New York State Militia)
  97th New York Infantry
  11th Pennsylvania Infantry
  88th Pennsylvania Infantry
  90th Pennsylvania Infantry
3rd Division (Maj. Gen. Abner Doubleday)
1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Rowley)
  80th New York Infantry (20th New York State Militia)
  121st Pennsylvania Infantry
  142nd Pennsylvania Infantry
  151st Pennsylvania Infantry
2nd Brigade (Col Edmund L. Dana)
  143rd Pennsylvania Infantry
  149th Pennsylvania Infantry
  150th Pennsylvania Infantry
3rd Brigade (Brig. Gen. George J. Stannard, wounded on July 3; Col. Francis V. Randall)
  12th Vermont Infantry
  13th Vermont Infantry

  14th Vermont Infantry
15th Vermont Infantry
  16th Vermont Infantry

2ND CORPS

Brig. Gen. John Gibbon, resumed divisional command on July 3; Maj. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock, wounded on July 3; Brig. Gen. William Hays

- Headquarters Guard
  - Escort: 6th New York Cavalry (two companies)
  - Provost Guard: 53rd Pennsylvania Infantry (three companies)
- Corps Artillery Brigade (Capt. John G. Hazard)
  - Battery B, 1st New York Light Artillery
  - Battery A, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery
  - Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery
  - Battery I, 1st United States Light Artillery
  - Battery A, 4th United States Light Artillery

1st Division (Brig. Gen. John C. Caldwell)

- 1st Brigade (Col. H. Boyd McKeen)
  - 5th New Hampshire Infantry
  - 61st New York Infantry (four companies)
  - 81st Pennsylvania Infantry
  - 148th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 2nd Brigade (Col. Patrick Kelly)
  - 28th Massachusetts Infantry
  - 63rd New York Infantry (two companies)
  - 69th New York Infantry (two companies)
  - 88th New York Infantry (two companies)
  - 116th Pennsylvania Infantry (four companies)
- 3rd Brigade (Lieut. Col. John Fraser)
  - 52nd New York Infantry
  - 57th New York Infantry
  - 66th New York Infantry
  - 140th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 4th Brigade (Col. John R. Brooke)
  - 27th Connecticut Infantry (two companies)
  - 2nd Delaware Infantry
  - 64th New York Infantry
  - 53rd Pennsylvania Infantry (seven companies)
  - 145th Pennsylvania Infantry (seven companies)

2nd Division (Brig. Gen. William Harrow, resumed brigade command on July 3; Brig. Gen. John Gibbon, wounded on July 3; Brig. Gen. William Harrow)

- 1st Company, Massachusetts Sharpshooters
- 1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. William Harrow, assumed divisional command on July 3; Col. Francis E. Heath)
  - 19th Maine Infantry
  - 15th Massachusetts Infantry
  - 1st Minnesota Infantry
  - 82nd New York Infantry (2nd New York State Militia)
- 2nd Brigade (Brig. Gen. Alexander S. Webb)

69th Pennsylvania Infantry
71st Pennsylvania Infantry
72nd Pennsylvania Infantry
106th Pennsylvania Infantry
3rd Brigade (Col. Norman J. Hall)
19th Massachusetts Infantry
20th Massachusetts Infantry
7th Michigan Infantry
42nd New York Infantry
59th New York Infantry (four companies)
3rd Division (Brig. Gen. Alexander Hays)
1st Brigade (Col. Samuel S. Carroll)
14th Indiana Infantry
4th Ohio Infantry
8th Ohio Infantry
7th West Virginia Infantry
2nd Brigade (Col. Thomas A. Smyth, wounded on July 3; Lieut. Col. Francis E. Pierce)
14th Connecticut Infantry
1st Delaware Infantry
12th New Jersey Infantry
10th New York Infantry (four companies)
108th New York Infantry
3rd Brigade (Col. Clinton D. MacDougall, relinquished command on July 3; Col. Eliakim Sherrill, resumed command on July 3, killed on July 3; Lieut. Col. James M. Bull)
39th New York Infantry (4 companies)
111th New York Infantry
125th New York Infantry
126th New York Infantry

3RD CORPS

Maj. Gen. David B. Birney
Maj. Gen. William French (assumed command on July 8)
Corps Artillery Brigade (Capt. George E. Randolph)
Battery B, 1st New Jersey Light Artillery
Battery D, 1st New York Light Artillery
4th New York Light Artillery
Battery E, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery
Battery K, 4th United States Artillery
1st Division (Brig. Gen. J. H. Hobart Ward)
1st Brigade (Col. Andrew H. Tippin)
57th Pennsylvania (eight companies)
63rd Pennsylvania Infantry
68th Pennsylvania Infantry
105th Pennsylvania Infantry
114th Pennsylvania Infantry
141st Pennsylvania Infantry
2nd Brigade (Col. Hiram Berdan)
20th Indiana Infantry
3rd Maine Infantry

- 4th Maine Infantry
- 86th New York Infantry
- 124th New York Infantry
- 99th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 1st United States Sharpshooters
- 2nd United States Sharpshooters (eight companies)

3rd Brigade (Col P. Régis de Trobriand)
- 17th Maine Infantry
- 3rd Michigan Infantry
- 5th Michigan Infantry
- 40th New York Infantry
- 110th Pennsylvania Infantry (six companies)

2nd Division (Brig. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys, assumed chief of staff duty, headquarters, July 8; Brig. Gen. Henry Prince)

1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Joseph B. Carr)
- 1st Massachusetts Infantry
- 11th Massachusetts Infantry
- 16th Massachusetts Infantry
- 12th New Hampshire Infantry
- 11th New Jersey Infantry
- 26th Pennsylvania Infantry

2nd Brigade (Col. William R. Brewster, resumed regimental command on July 11; Brig. Gen. Francis B. Spinola)
- 70th New York Infantry (1st Excelsior)
- 71st New York Infantry (2nd Excelsior)
- 72nd New York Infantry (3rd Excelsior)
- 73rd New York Infantry (4th Excelsior)
- 74th New York Infantry (5th Excelsior)
- 120th New York Infantry

3rd Brigade (Col. George C. Burling)
- 2nd New Hampshire Infantry
- 5th New Jersey Infantry
- 6th New Jersey Infantry
- 7th New Jersey Infantry
- 8th New Jersey Infantry
- 115th Pennsylvania Infantry

3rd Division, joined army of the Potomac on July 8 (Brig. Gen. Washington Elliott)

1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. William H. Morris)
- 14th New Jersey Infantry
- 6th New York Heavy Artillery
- 151st New York Infantry
- 10th Vermont Infantry

2nd Brigade (Col. J. Warren Keifer)
- 6th Maryland Infantry
- 110th Ohio Infantry
- 122nd Ohio Infantry
- 138th Pennsylvania Infantry

3rd Brigade (Col. Benjamin F. Smith)
- 106th New York Infantry
- 126th Ohio Infantry

- 67th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 87th Pennsylvania Infantry

5TH CORPS

Maj. Gen. George Sykes

Headquarters Guard
- 12th New York Infantry (two companies)
- 17th Pennsylvania Cavalry (two companies)

Artillery Brigade (Capt. Augustus P. Martin)
- 3rd Massachusetts Light Artillery
- Battery C, 1st New York Light Artillery
- Battery L, 1st Ohio Light Artillery
- Battery D, 5th United States Light Artillery
- Battery I, 5th United States Light Artillery

1st Division (Brig. Gen. James Barnes, detached on July 4; Brig. Gen. Charles Griffin)

1st Brigade (Col. William S. Tilton)
- 18th Massachusetts Infantry
- 22nd Massachusetts Infantry
- 2nd Company, Massachusetts Sharpshooters
- 1st Michigan Infantry
- 118th Pennsylvania Infantry

2nd Brigade (Col. Jacob B. Sweitzer)
- 9th Massachusetts Infantry
- 32nd Massachusetts Infantry (nine companies)
- 4th Michigan Infantry
- 62nd Pennsylvania Infantry

3rd Brigade (Col. James C. Rice)
- 20th Maine Infantry
- 16th Michigan Infantry
- 44th New York Infantry
- 83rd Pennsylvania Infantry

2nd Division (Brig. Gen. Romeyn B. Ayres)

1st Brigade (Col. Hannibal Day)
- 3rd United States Infantry (six companies)

4th United States Infantry (four companies)
- 6th United States Infantry (five companies)
- 12th United States Infantry (eight companies)
- 14th United States Infantry (eight companies)

2nd Brigade (Col. Sidney Burbank)
- 2nd United States Infantry (six companies)
- 7th United States Infantry (four companies)
- 10th United States Infantry (three companies)
- 11th United States Infantry (six companies)
- 17th United States Infantry (seven companies)

3rd Brigade (Col. Kenner Garrard)
- 140th New York Infantry
- 146th New York Infantry
- 91st Pennsylvania Infantry
- 155th Pennsylvania Infantry

3rd Division (Brig. Gen. Samuel W. Crawford)
1st Brigade (Col. William McCandless)
    1st Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry (nine companies)
    2nd Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry
    6th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry
    13th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry (1st Pennsylvania Rifles)
3rd Brigade (Col. Joseph W. Fisher)
    5th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry
    9th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry
    10th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry
    11th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry
    12th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry (nine companies)

6TH CORPS

Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick
Headquarters Guard
    1st New Jersey Cavalry (one company)
    1st Pennsylvania Cavalry (one company)
Artillery Brigade (Col. Charles H. Tompkins)
    Battery A, 1st Massachusetts Light Artillery
    1st New York Light Artillery
    3rd New York Light Artillery
    Battery C, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery
    Battery G, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery
    Battery D, 2nd United States Light Artillery
    Battery G, 2nd United States Light Artillery
    Battery F, 5th United States Light Artillery
1st Division (Brig. Gen. Horatio G. Wright)
Provost Guard
    4th New Jersey Infantry (3 companies)
1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Alfred T. A. Torbert)
    1st New Jersey Infantry
    2nd New Jersey Infantry
    3rd New Jersey Infantry
    15th New Jersey Infantry
2nd Brigade (Brig. Gen. Joseph J. Bartlett)
    5th Maine Infantry
    121st New York Infantry
    95th Pennsylvania Infantry
    96th Pennsylvania Infantry
3rd Brigade (Brig. Gen. David A. Russell)
    6th Maine Infantry
    49th Pennsylvania Infantry (four companies)
    119th Pennsylvania Infantry
    5th Wisconsin Infantry
2nd Division (Brig. Gen. Albion P. Howe)
2nd Brigade (Col. Lewis A. Grant)
    2nd Vermont Infantry
    3rd Vermont Infantry

- 4th Vermont Infantry
- 5th Vermont Infantry
- 6th Vermont Infantry

3rd Brigade (Brig. Gen. Thomas H. Neill)
- 7th Maine Infantry (six companies)
- 33rd New York Infantry (one company)
- 43rd New York Infantry
- 49th New York Infantry
- 77th New York Infantry
- 61st Pennsylvania Infantry

3rd Division (Brig. Gen. Frank Wheaton)
1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Alexander Shaler)
- 65th New York Infantry
- 67th New York Infantry
- 122nd New York Infantry
- 23rd Pennsylvania Infantry
- 82nd Pennsylvania Infantry

2nd Brigade (Col. Henry L. Eustis)
- 7th Massachusetts Infantry
- 10th Massachusetts Infantry
- 37th Massachusetts Infantry
- 2nd Rhode Island Infantry

3rd Brigade (Col. David J. Nevin)
- 62nd New York Infantry
- 93rd Pennsylvania Infantry
- 98th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 139th Pennsylvania Infantry

11TH CORPS

Maj. Gen. Oliver Howard
Headquarters Guard
- 1st Indiana Cavalry (two companies)
- 8th New York Infantry (one company)

Artillery Brigade (Maj. Thomas W. Osborn)
- Battery I, 1st New York Light Artillery
- 13th New York Light Artillery
- Battery I, 1st Ohio Light Artillery
- Battery K, 1st Ohio Light Artillery
- Battery G, 4th United States Light Artillery

1st Division (Brig. Gen. Adelbert Ames)
1st Brigade (Col. Leopold von Gilsa)
- 41st New York Infantry (nine companies)
- 54th New York Infantry
- 68th New York Infantry
- 153rd Pennsylvania Infantry

2nd Brigade (Col. Andrew L. Harris)
- 17th Connecticut Infantry
- 25th Ohio Infantry
- 75th Ohio Infantry

107th Ohio Infantry

2nd Division (Brig. Gen. Adolph von Steinwehr)

1st Brigade (Col. Charles R. Coster)
- 134th New York Infantry
- 154th New York Infantry
- 27th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 73rd Pennsylvania Infantry

2nd Brigade (Col. Orland Smith)
- 33rd Massachusetts Infantry
- 136th New York Infantry
- 55th Ohio Infantry
- 73rd Ohio Infantry

3rd Division (Maj. Gen. Carl Schurz)

1st Brigade (Col. George von Amsberg, resumed regimental command on July 13; Brig. Gen. Hector Tyndale)
- 82nd Illinois Infantry
- 45th New York Infantry
- 157th New York Infantry
- 61st Ohio Infantry
- 74th Pennsylvania Infantry

2nd Brigade (Col. Włodzimierz Krzyżanowski)
- 58th New York Infantry
- 119th New York Infantry
- 82nd Ohio Infantry
- 75th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 26th Wisconsin Infantry

12TH CORPS

Brig. Gen. Alpheus S. Williams, resumed divisional command on July 4; Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum

Provost Guard: 10th Maine Infantry Battalion (three companies)

Artillery Brigade (Lieut. Edward D. Muhlenberg)
- Battery M, 1st New York Light Artillery
- Independent Battery E, Pennsylvania Light Artillery
- Battery F, 4th United States Light Artillery
- Battery K, 5th United States Light Artillery

1st Division (Brig. Gen. Thomas H. Ruger, resumed brigade command on July 4; Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams)

1st Brigade (Col. Archibald L. McDougall)
- 5th Connecticut Infantry
- 20th Connecticut Infantry
- 3rd Maryland Infantry
- 123rd New York Infantry
- 145th New York Infantry
- 46th Pennsylvania Infantry

2nd Brigade (Brig. Henry H. Lockwood)
- 1st Maryland, Potomac Home Brigade Infantry
- 1st Maryland, Eastern Shore Infantry
- 150th New York Infantry

3rd Brigade (Col. Silas Colgrove, resumed regimental command on July 4; Brig. Gen. Thomas H. Ruger)
  27th Indiana Infantry
  2nd Massachusetts Infantry
  13th New Jersey Infantry
  107th New York Infantry
  3rd Wisconsin Infantry

2nd Division (Brig. Gen. John W. Geary)

1st Brigade (Col. Charles Candy)
  5th Ohio Infantry
  7th Ohio Infantry
  29th Ohio Infantry
  66th Ohio Infantry
  28th Pennsylvania Infantry
  147th Pennsylvania Infantry (eight companies)

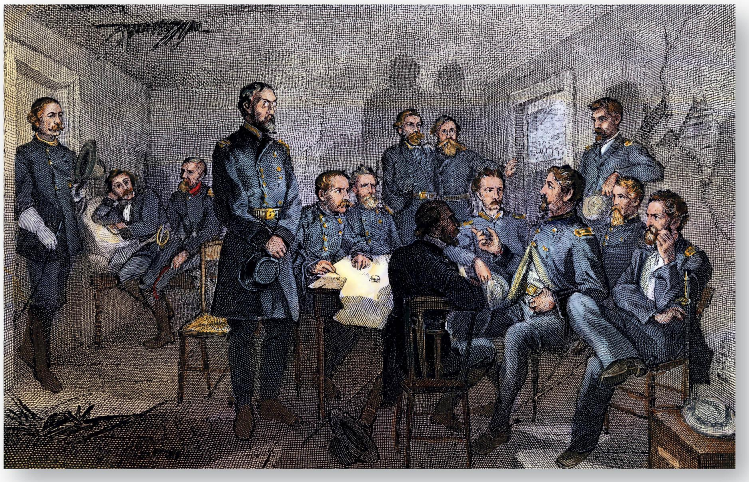
2nd Brigade (Col. George A. Cobham, Jr., resumed regimental command on July 4; Brig. Gen. Thomas L. Kane)
  29th Pennsylvania Infantry
  109th Pennsylvania Infantry
  111th Pennsylvania Infantry

3rd Brigade (Brig. Gen. George S. Greene)
  60th New York Infantry
  78th New York Infantry
  102nd New York Infantry
  137th New York Infantry
  149th New York Infantry

OPPOSING PLANS

At 11.00 p.m., July 2, Meade's corps commanders gathered inside the home of Lydia Leister to hold a council of war. This meeting consisted of Meade and his chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Daniel Butterfield; his chief engineer, Brig. Gen. Gouverneur Warren; and his adjutant general, Brig. Gen. Seth Williams. Together, they hosted nine other generals: the army's two wing commanders, Maj. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock (left wing) and Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum (right wing); and seven corps commanders: Maj. Gen. John Newton (1st Corps), Brig. Gen. John Gibbon (2nd Corps), Maj. Gen. David B. Birney (3rd Corps), Maj. Gen. George Sykes (5th Corps), Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick (6th Corps), Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard (11th Corps), and Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams (12th Corps).

The first order of business involved reporting the condition of the army. Together, the generals assumed the army fielded about 58,000 effectives, although Birney believed the 3rd Corps—with only 6,400 men—was "not in good condition to fight." After discussing the day's events, Meade cut to the heart of the matter: what should be the plan for July 3? Butterfield devised a list of questions. From these, he polled the other officers. Butterfield asked, "Under existing circumstances, is it advisable for this army to remain in its present position, or to retire to another nearer its base of supplies?" One by one, the generals delivered their opinions. Gibbon went first, arguing that the army should correct its position but not retreat. All the other generals agreed with him. Next, Butterfield asked, "It being determined to remain in present position, shall the army attack or wait the attack of the enemy?" Once again, going around the room, the officers unanimously concluded that the army should wait for an attack. Finally, Butterfield asked, "If we wait attack, how long?" Here, the generals differed. Most of them did not want to wait long. The plurality—Williams, Birney, Sykes, and Sedgwick—all suggested waiting one more day.



Just before midnight, July 3, Meade's corps commanders assembled inside the Lydia Leister farmhouse to hold a council of war. Meade (fourth from left) allowed his chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Daniel Butterfield (fifth from left), to poll the corps commanders for their opinions about the army's next move. The majority believed the Army of the Potomac should hold its position for another day. Meade concurred with this opinion. He advised his corps commanders to remain on the defensive. (North Wind Picture Archives/Alamy Stock Photo)

Meade said little until all questions had been answered. He considered the majority opinions to be his decisions. His army, he declared, would stay in Gettysburg and remain on the defensive at least one more day. In correspondence to Lincoln's chief adviser, Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, Meade had already indicated he would do this. Thus, the council vote did not cause him to make up his mind; it merely confirmed his intended course of action. As the meeting broke up, Meade pulled Gibbon aside. Meade said, "Gibbon, if Lee attacks me to-morrow, it will be on *your front*." Gibbon asked Meade how he knew this. "Because," said Meade, "he has tried my left and failed, and has tried my right and failed; and if he concludes to try it again, he will try the centre, right on your front." With bluster, Gibbon replied, "Well, general, I hope he does, and if he does, we shall whip him."

Brig. Gen. John Gibbon served as acting commander of the 2nd Corps, the unit assigned to the Army of the Potomac's center. As the council of war broke up, Meade pulled Gibbon aside and warned him that if Lee decided to attack on July 3, the main attack would occur along his front. Meade's prediction proved prophetic. (NARA)

Gibbon had reason to be confident. On July 3, the Army of the Potomac occupied good ground. The army's infantry held defensible uplands and its artillery had excellent lines of sight. The Union line ran approximately two miles. On the southern end, the left flank was anchored by two 6th Corps brigades—Brig. Gen. David Russell's and Brig. Gen. Lewis Grant's. These brigades, both fresh to the battlefield, faced south, astride the Taneytown Road. Any attempt to turn the Union left would be visible to their skirmishers. From there, the Union line bent northward, over two rocky hills, Big Round Top and Little Round Top. Sykes's 5th Corps occupied these hills and also the saddle between them. North of Little Round Top, three more 6th Corps brigades continued the line, passing through farm fields owned by John and George Weikert. From there, Birney's 3rd Corps picked up the line, although most of his regiments held a position in reserve, occupying fields owned by Jacob Hummelbaugh. In front of them, a heavy line of artillery—forty-five cannon, mostly from Brig. Gen. Robert O. Tyler's Artillery Reserve—sat atop Cemetery Ridge. This artillery faced west, confronting the center of Lee's line. North of the Hummelbaugh house, five regiments from Maj. Gen. Newton's 1st Corps held the line. Other 1st Corps regiments (mostly from 2nd and 3rd Divisions) held a reserve position near the Taneytown Road, adjacent to Birney's men. Newton's men had been badly mauled on July 1, and like the 3rd Corps, were in poor condition.

Gibbon's 2nd Corps continued the line northward along Cemetery Ridge. These Union troops held ground owned by Gettysburg residents named Frey, Fisher, Leister, Brian, and Ziegler. Another twenty-eight cannon covered Gibbon's troops. From Ziegler's Grove, the Union line bent east over the Taneytown Road and the Baltimore Pike. The 11th Corps held this area, known as Cemetery Hill, named for the town cemetery. The corps commander, Howard, deployed forty-five artillery pieces along the west slope of the hill (between the Taneytown Road and Baltimore Pike) and another eighteen on the east slope (near the cemetery gatehouse).

East of the pike, the Union line came to a terminus at Culp's Hill, a wooded acclivity with two distinct summits. Three brigades—two from Brig. Gen. James Wadsworth's division and one from Brig. Gen. John Geary's—held the upper summit of Culp's Hill, but Confederate forces held the smaller, lower summit to the southeast. The previous day, troops from Brig. Gen. Thomas Ruger's division had built earthworks there, but then relinquished them to offer temporary assistance to the embattled Union left. Around midnight, Ruger's men attempted to return to their old position but found it full of enemy troops. After a confusing nighttime skirmish, Ruger's men pulled back to the Baltimore Pike.

The third day of the battle was Maj. Gen. George G. Meade's sixth day in command of the Army of the Potomac. Meade masterfully directed his army during the battle's first two days. (Library of Congress)

Meanwhile, over on Seminary Ridge, just west of Gettysburg, Lee conducted no council of war. Confident in his decision making, he planned to repeat the same moves from the previous day. "The general plan was unchanged," Lee wrote. "Longstreet, re-enforced by Pickett's three brigades, which arrived near the battle-field during the afternoon of the 2d, was ordered to attack the next morning, and General Ewell was directed to assail the enemy's right at the same time."

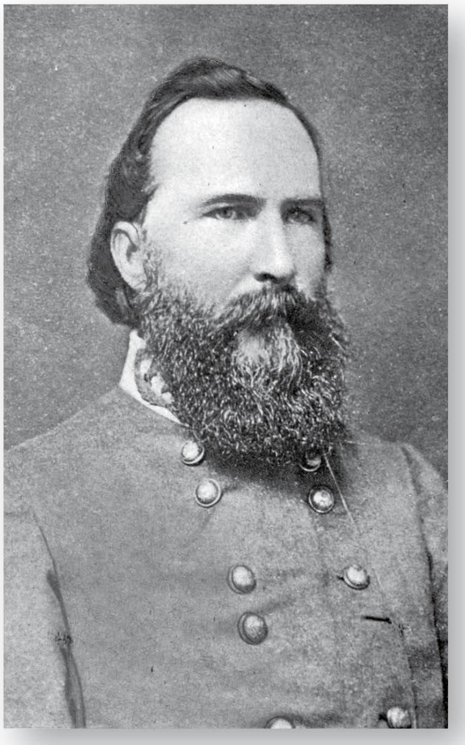
In simple terms, Lee wanted to hit both Union flanks. Lieut. Gen. James Longstreet's corps, now in full, would strike the left of the Union line. Ewell's corps would push against the Union right at Culp's Hill. In his official report, Lee did not describe the specific targets of these attacks, but Longstreet offered some postwar clarification. When it came to the attack against the Union left, Longstreet believed that Lee had wanted him to target the area north of the Round Tops. Longstreet later wrote that Lee wished for the morning attack to “assault the enemy’s left centre by a column” to be composed of all three of his divisions. Longstreet’s men were supposed to collect behind the forward line—probably in the vicinity of Devil’s Den and the Rose wheat field—form into a column of divisions, and with Maj. Gen. George Pickett’s division in the lead, aim for the position occupied by the Union 5th and 6th Corps.

It is not known at what hour Lee sent orders to Longstreet and Ewell. One of Longstreet’s artillery officers, Lieut. Col. E. P. Alexander, later maintained that Lee’s orders arrived before midnight, because Longstreet told him that, “we would renew the attack early the next morning.” Yet, years after the war, Longstreet claimed no such orders ever came. Perhaps Longstreet’s version of events was correct, but shrewd historians have noted that Ewell received *his* orders before midnight. Most likely, Longstreet received Lee’s orders and simply ignored them. He had, by his own admission, openly questioned Lee’s leadership in Pennsylvania several times and perhaps he now felt it necessary to alter Lee’s plan by adding his own modification to it.

On the other flank, Ewell went to work, gathering his infantry for the final push. Already, one division—Maj. Gen. Edward Johnson’s—had taken a portion of the southeast slope of Culp’s Hill. Over the nighttime hours, Ewell shifted three additional brigades to support Johnson’s men. Johnson’s division ended up attacking at 5.30 a.m., a story that forms the subject of another section of this book.

Sometime during the morning, possibly as early as 6.00 a.m., Lee and his staff rode to the vicinity of the Peach Orchard to confer with Longstreet, and, presumably, to observe the attack that Lee had ordered him to execute. Two generals—Lieut. Gen. A. P. Hill and Maj. Gen. Henry Heth—accompanied him. As Longstreet remembered it, he had just issued an order to maneuver his corps when Lee appeared and countermanded it.

Even today, Longstreet’s failure to attack the Union left on the morning of July 3 remains a matter of debate. When Lee submitted his official report, he laid the blame at Longstreet’s feet, proclaiming, “General Longstreet’s dispositions were not completed as early as was expected, but before notice could be sent to General Ewell, General Johnson had already become engaged, and it was too late to recall him.” Years after the war (and after Lee had died), Longstreet called Lee’s report “disingenuous.” He wrote, “He did not give or send me orders for the morning of the third day, nor did he reinforce me by Pickett’s brigades for a morning attack.” Postwar recollections from other Confederate officers who were present at this meeting only muddle the picture, and consequently, the truth may never be known.



Lee’s senior corps commander, Lieut. Gen. James Longstreet, spoiled Lee’s plans for a renewed attack against the flanks. Although Longstreet’s postwar writings vehemently denied any wrongdoing, all evidence suggests that he ignored an order from Lee to repeat the attack against the Union left. By the time Lee conferred with Longstreet at 6.00 a.m., it proved too late to recall the attack made by Lieut. Gen. Richard Ewell’s corps against the Union position at Culp’s Hill. After a prickly dialogue with Lee held near the Peach Orchard, Longstreet reluctantly agreed to organize a different attack. This agreement eventually led to the largest infantry assault of the battle: Pickett’s Charge. (Library of Congress)

Whoever ought to bear the blame, the absence of an attack against the Union left compelled Lee to revise his plan. At first, Lee wondered if Longstreet could attack the left-center of the Union line on his own, without Ewell simultaneously attacking against the Union right. Immediately, Longstreet answered, “No.” Longstreet told Lee that he required, at minimum, 30,000 men to make any assault at all. Two of his divisions—Brig. Gen. Evander Law's (formerly Maj. Gen. John B. Hood's) and Maj. Gen. Lafayette McLaws's—had sustained heavy losses on July 2. When combined with Pickett's brigades, Longstreet believed he would have only 13,000 troops available.

Longstreet delegated the task of coordinating the artillery bombardment to one of his battalion commanders, Lieut. Col. E. P. Alexander. Dutifully, Alexander took charge of a line of seventy-five guns belonging to Longstreet's corps that stretched from the Peach Orchard to Spangler's Woods. According to the plan, when Alexander's guns opened fire, nearby artillery from Hill's and Ewell's corps would join in. Pessimistically, so Alexander later wrote, "I knew that our guns could not drive off the enemy, but I had a vague hope that with Ewell's and Hill's cooperation something might happen, though I knew little either of their positions, their opportunities, or their orders." (Library of Congress)

On the spot, Lee decided to change both Longstreet's objective and the units under his authority. Lee pointed toward the center of the Union line, the north end of Cemetery Ridge. That area, he said, would be Longstreet's new target. Raising his clenched fist and shaking it in that direction, he declared, "The enemy is there, and I am going to strike him!" Further, Lee commanded, Longstreet would be given fresh troops. He would continue to use Pickett's brigades, but Law's and McLaws's divisions would remain on the defensive. In their place, Lee reassigned six brigades from A. P. Hill's corps. (All six had fought on July 1, but not on July 2.) With this combination, Lee believed Longstreet's roster would contain at least 15,000 men.

Upon hearing this, Longstreet registered his disapproval. He said, "General, I have been a soldier all my life. I have been with soldiers engaged in fights by couples, by squads, companies, regiments, divisions, and armies, and should know as well as anyone what soldiers can do. It is my opinion that no fifteen thousand men ever arrayed for battle can take that position."

Patiently, Lee waited until Longstreet had finished his soliloquy, and then told him to prepare Pickett's men. Hill's brigades, he said, would join him shortly. Believing there was little use in arguing, Longstreet remained silent. But bitterness stirred. Three weeks after the battle, Longstreet lamented to his uncle that the battle was "not made as I would have made it." Lee, he wrote, "chose the plans adopted."

Like many of Lee's other choices at Gettysburg, his reasons for reorienting Longstreet's assault toward the middle of the Union line remain uncertain. When writing his after-action report, Lee ignored this crucial moment. Years after the war, one of Lee's staff officers, Col. Armistead L. Long, believed that Lee made the decision only after "mature consideration" and "on grounds that presented fair prospects of success." As Long explained it, on the second day of the battle, Lee had attacked both flanks, forcing Meade to commit fresh troops to protect his wings. Thus, Lee presumed the center of the Union line had silently eroded. If successful, a frontal attack could split the Army of the Potomac in two. Col. Long, who was present at the meeting with Longstreet, recalled, "[Meade's] wings would be isolated and paralyzed, so far as regarded supporting each other."

Not everyone believed Lee's mind was operating wisely. One of Longstreet's artillery officers, Lieut. Col. Alexander, believed Lee had rashly selected both the point of attack and the method of the assault. The ground in front of Cemetery Ridge was open and in full view of every Union cannon from Little Round Top to Cemetery Hill. A massed assault advancing across a mile of rolling countryside could not likely maintain its momentum if it came under artillery fire. If the generals of the Union army had the option of choosing where and how the Army of Northern Virginia should advance, so Alexander wrote, they would have selected this very plan. Beyond Longstreet, no one had the temerity to question Lee’s decision.

With that, the die had been cast.

THE THIRD DAY

CULP’S HILL

After leaving the Leister house council, Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams of the 12th Corps returned to his headquarters along the Baltimore Pike. When he arrived, his staff officers alerted him to a crisis. They informed him that the corps could not retake its old position atop Culp’s Hill because Confederates now occupied a portion of the earthworks. More urgently, nothing stood between the Confederates and the Baltimore Pike, the Union army’s main line of retreat. If the enemy continued their assault at daybreak, the entire Union army might have to fight for its life. More than any terrain feature, Meade’s army required control of the Baltimore Pike. If it fell to Confederate forces, there was no question about Meade’s next move. The Army of the Potomac would have to retreat.

As Williams learned of this, he also received some good news. One 12th Corps brigade—Brig. Gen. George Greene’s—still held a portion of the Culp’s Hill earthworks. Back when Williams had been dispatched to bolster the Union left flank (only four hours earlier) a staff officer had retained Greene’s brigade atop the upper summit. For two hours, Greene’s men tenaciously held their position, keeping that portion of the hill in Union hands.

Some of Greene’s staff officers arrived on the scene and consulted with Williams. Greene, they said, needed more ammunition and fresh troops. Although the earthworks had given his New Yorkers a decided advantage over Johnson’s division, they were surviving on no sleep and with empty cartridge boxes. Something needed to be done. In a few minutes, Slocum—the wing commander—arrived and Williams explained the problem. In brusque fashion, Slocum replied, “Well! Drive them out at daylight.” Thus, Slocum countermanded the council of war’s decision to stay put. If Meade and the other generals had wanted to remain on the defensive, the crisis at Culp’s Hill reversed that.

At Gettysburg, Maj. Gen. Henry Warner Slocum commanded the right wing of the Army of the Potomac. After leaving the council of war at the Leister farm, Slocum learned that Confederate soldiers from Ewell’s corps had taken possession of a quarter-mile of Union-built earthworks on the lower summit of Culp’s Hill. Sensing an emergency, Slocum modified Meade’s orders. The 12th Corps—the corps he usually commanded—now had orders to attack the Confederates and regain the lost earthworks. (Library of Congress)

Williams considered it a tall order. The Confederates had an excellent position. Not only did they possess the Union’s well-built fortifications, but a rugged stone wall also protected their front. Additionally, a belt of woods shielded them from the Union artillery. Williams wrote, “It seemed to me very certain that the rebels, having easily got a good thing, would endeavor to hold on to it to the bitter end.” But Greene’s men held the hill’s highest point and Williams believed he could use that to his advantage. He planned to fill Greene’s position with reinforcements, and from there, launch a counterattack, driving Johnson’s men from the lower hill.

Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams served as acting commander of the 12th Corps. Over the nighttime hours, he tirelessly coordinated the scattered elements of his corps, getting them into position for a predawn artillery bombardment followed by a two-pronged infantry attack. Williams's leadership proved invaluable, and after seven hours of combat, the 12th Corps accomplished its mission. After the battle, Williams received no recognition for his achievements, in part, because Meade failed to consult Williams's action report when he drew up his army-wide report. Filing an official grievance, Williams forced Meade to write a half-hearted apology. (Library of Congress)

For the next three hours, he worked tirelessly to make preparations. Between 1.00 and 3.00 a.m., he collected five batteries, totaling twenty-eight guns, and assembled them on the northern slope of Powers Hill and on the Nathaniel Lightner farm, two landmarks on the southwest side of the pike. At the same time, Williams sent staff officers to track down every available 12th Corps unit. Williams needed to find two missing brigades led by Brig. Gen. John Geary, the commander of his 2nd Division. The previous evening, Geary had led these brigades to the Union left flank, but became lost. Sometime after 1.00 a.m., after being located by the fatigued staff officers, Geary and his men returned to Powers Hill. Promptly, Williams briefed Geary on the plan of attack. The 12th Corps artillery would shell the Confederates, hitting them through the trees, and as soon as the barrage ceased, Geary would relieve Greene's beleaguered infantry. From the upper summit, Geary would then advance down the slope, heading southeast, and fire into the Confederates on the lower summit. This would keep their attentions fixed in that direction. Once that happened, Ruger's 1st Division would advance northward across the pike, dislodge the enemy, and reclaim the lost earthworks. At about 3.30 a.m., after a series of conferences held in complete darkness, Williams got some shuteye. He found a flat rock and managed to sleep for thirty minutes, his only slumber in the past twenty-four hours.

As the 12th Corps prepared for its precarious morning assault, the Confederates, likewise, prepared to carry out an attack order—the one that came from Lee. Throughout the predawn hours, Ewell sent reinforcements. Altogether, Ewell's assaulting force consisted of seven brigades. Three of Johnson's brigades—Lieut. Col. Robert Dungan's, Col. Jesse Williams's, and Brig. Gen. George H. Steuart's—had attacked the previous evening. They were still perched on the slope of the hill, sleeping under arms. Formed in two lines with skirmishers out in front, Dungan's Virginians held the right of the line, directly opposite the hill's highest point. Williams's Louisianans, also in two lines, held low ground facing a shallow ravine where the hill dipped between its upper and lower summits. Steuart's men were astride the lower hill, with half of his troops facing the Union-occupied upper summit and the other half facing the Baltimore Pike. Johnson's fourth brigade—Brig. Gen. James A. Walker's—had been waylaid by an afternoon skirmish at Brinkerhoff Ridge. It arrived at 2.00 a.m., taking position behind Steuart's men.

As for Ewell's reinforcements, two of Maj. Gen. Robert Rodes's brigades—Col. Edward O'Neal's and Brig. Gen. Junius Daniel's—joined Johnson's division at 4.00 a.m. In two lines, O'Neal's men took position in support of Williams, while Daniel's men formed in two lines behind Dungan. The arrival of these brigades caused considerable commotion, such that it touched off a furious nighttime firefight between the Confederate skirmish line and Greene's men, who fired at any stray noise. Finally, Brig. Gen. William Smith's brigade (of Maj. Gen. Jubal Early's division) arrived after daybreak and took position in the left-rear of Johnson's division. It wedged itself between Rock Creek and the edge of Abraham Spangler's eastern meadow. Ewell gave Johnson command of the entire force, which probably constituted about 8,600 officers and men.

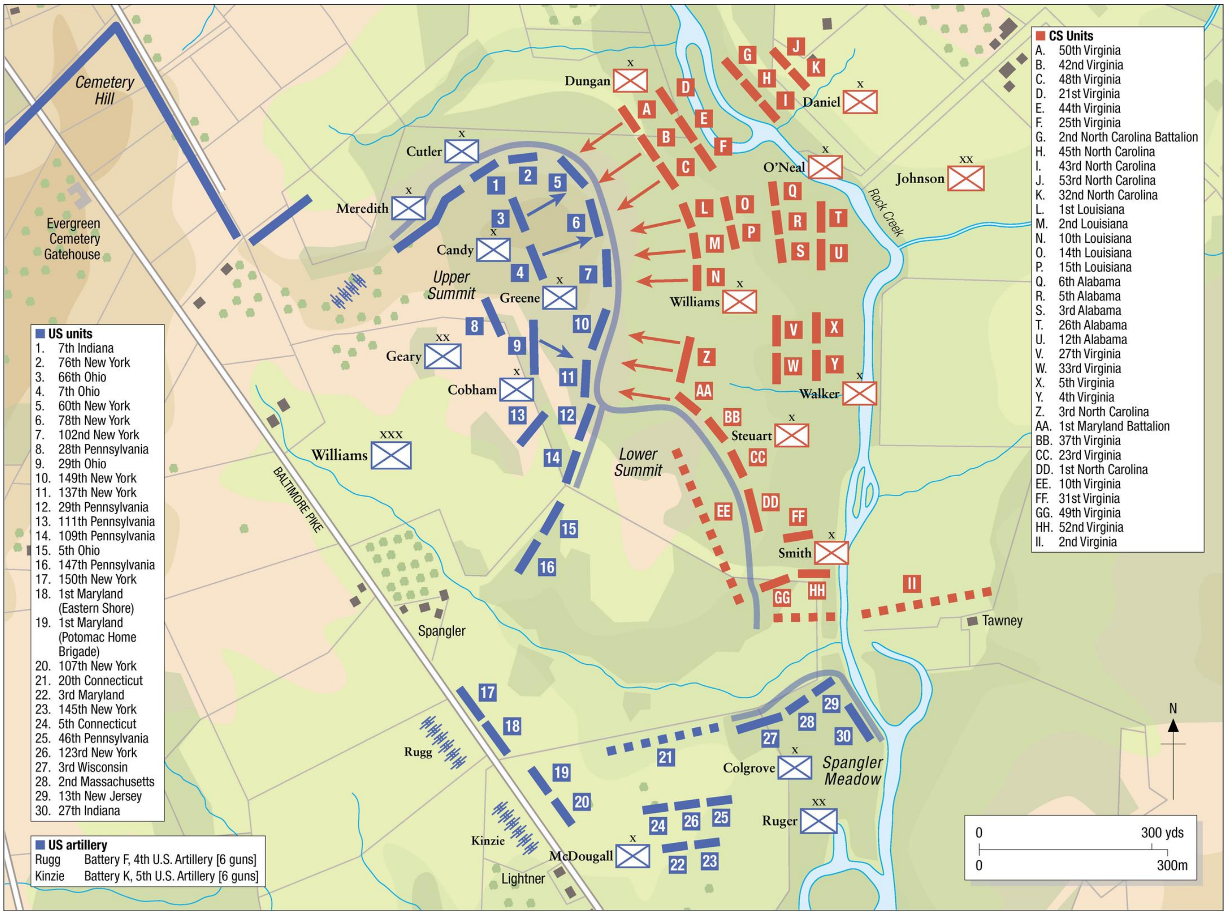
At 4.30 a.m., Alpheus Williams sought out his artillery commander, Lieut. Edward D. Muhlenberg, and ordered him to commence the bombardment. Muhlenberg's gunners could not see their foe, but they were aware of their proximity, which they estimated to be only 600 to 800 yards distant. For the next hour, shot and shell crashed through the trees on the lower summit, catching Johnson's men by surprise. Confederate accounts say little about this shelling, but it must have staggered them, both in terms of noise and accuracy. The clamor grew so loud that it awakened a Wisconsin soldier who was sleeping in nearby McAllister's Woods. He wrote that the shells were "screaming in a most frightful manner … the shells crashing among the trees, splintering them and scattering the limbs over the ground." A soldier from the 123rd New York who later viewed the results of the barrage confirmed that Union gunners made mincemeat out of the rebels, probably hitting the 3rd North Carolina and 1st Maryland (C.S.) Battalion. "The rebels lay thick," he wrote, "and it was perfectly sickening to view the scene inside the works. Our artillery made sad havoc among the enemy's ranks."

This post-battle photograph depicts the thickly wooded, boulder-strewn slopes of Culp's Hill. This terrain made command and control difficult for both Union and Confederate forces. A Wisconsin soldier who fought there later wrote, "The woods and underbrush were so thick that we could not see either our own men or the Rebels, but we could see the bright flashes of their guns gleaming among the rocks and trees, like a thousand lightning flashes dancing." (Library of Congress)

When the Union artillery fire slackened, Williams sent in his infantry. Gingerly, the 12th Corps soldiers inched their way toward the earthworks. Geary's two brigades made their way across the Abraham Spangler farm, trying to find the entrenchments they had built the previous evening. As they entered the woods on the west side of Culp's Hill, they met their haggard comrades from Greene's 3rd Brigade. Eager to get out of harm's way and clean their rifles, Greene's New Yorkers jubilantly swapped places with Geary's men.

Geary began dispersing his regiments. Three regiments under Col. Charles Candy relieved Greene's men atop the upper hill. (A fourth regiment remained in reserve, guarding a small hollow on the hill's west slope.) Meanwhile, Col. George Cobham's Pennsylvania brigade took position inside a traverse that connected the 12th Corps entrenchments with the Spangler farm lane. Two regiments held the traverse, side by side, while Cobham's third regiment held a position in reserve. Two more of Candy's regiments moved forward to take the earthworks on the lower hill, but when they took fire from Steuart's men, they had to scrub their mission and withdraw to the safety of the Spangler lane, which was protected by stone walls on both sides.

Farther south, Ruger's division also tried to reclaim the earthworks on the lower hill, but it came up short. Three regiments—the 1st Maryland (U.S.) Potomac Home Brigade, the 107th New York, and the 20th Connecticut—crossed a swampy meadow on the east side of the Spangler property, but they found Johnson's men impossible to budge. Additionally, many undershot rounds from the 12th Corps artillery landed among Ruger's men. At least five regimental commanders complained of friendly fire coming from the Union batteries atop Powers Hill.


Cemetery Hill
Evergreen Cemetery Gatehouse
Upper Summit
Lower Summit
Spangler Meadow
Rock Creek
BALTIMORE PIKE
Dungan
Daniel
Johnson
O'Neal
Cutler
Meredith
Candy
Greene
Geary
Cobham
Williams
Steuart
Walker
Smith
Spangler
Tawney
Rugg
Kinzie
McDougall
Lightner
Colgrove
Ruger
N
0
300 yds
0
300m
CS Units
A. 50th Virginia
B. 42nd Virginia
C. 48th Virginia
D. 21st Virginia
E. 44th Virginia
F. 25th Virginia
G. 2nd North Carolina Battalion
H. 45th North Carolina
I. 43rd North Carolina
J. 53rd North Carolina
K. 32nd North Carolina
L. 1st Louisiana
M. 2nd Louisiana
N. 10th Louisiana
O. 14th Louisiana
P. 15th Louisiana
Q. 6th Alabama
R. 5th Alabama
S. 3rd Alabama
T. 26th Alabama
U. 12th Alabama
V. 27th Virginia
W. 33rd Virginia
X. 5th Virginia
Y. 4th Virginia
Z. 3rd North Carolina
AA. 1st Maryland Battalion
BB. 37th Virginia
CC. 23rd Virginia
DD. 1st North Carolina
EE. 10th Virginia
FF. 31st Virginia
GG. 49th Virginia
HH. 52nd Virginia
II. 2nd Virginia
US units
1. 7th Indiana
2. 76th New York
3. 66th Ohio
4. 7th Ohio
5. 60th New York
6. 78th New York
7. 102nd New York
8. 28th Pennsylvania
9. 29th Ohio
10. 149th New York
11. 137th New York
12. 29th Pennsylvania
13. 111th Pennsylvania
14. 109th Pennsylvania
15. 5th Ohio
16. 147th Pennsylvania
17. 150th New York
18. 1st Maryland (Eastern Shore)
19. 1st Maryland (Potomac Home Brigade)
20. 107th New York
21. 20th Connecticut
22. 3rd Maryland
23. 145th New York
24. 5th Connecticut
25. 46th Pennsylvania
26. 123rd New York
27. 3rd Wisconsin
28. 2nd Massachusetts
29. 13th New Jersey
30. 27th Indiana
US artillery
Rugg Battery F, 4th U.S. Artillery [6 guns]
Kinzie Battery K, 5th U.S. Artillery [6 guns]

Culp's Hill (Dawn Action)

The arrival of the 12th Corps forced Johnson to react. With Geary's division piling into the earthworks and with Ruger's men trying to regain the lower hill, Johnson knew he could not stay put. If he wished to press forward and claim the Baltimore Pike, he had to move now or never. It was nearly daylight anyway, precisely the time Lee had instructed Ewell to begin the attack.

Maj. Gen. Edward Johnson commanded the Confederate division that had seized a section of Union earthworks on July 2. When the 12th Corps artillery opened fire at 4.30 a.m., July 3, Johnson decided to counterattack, commencing a general assault. Under the belief that Longstreet's corps would eventually attack the Union left sometime in the near future, Johnson continued to send brigade after brigade into the fray. Shortly before noon, after having witnessed several futile assaults, Johnson admitted defeat. He ordered his men to relinquish the captured earthworks to the enemy. (Library of Congress)

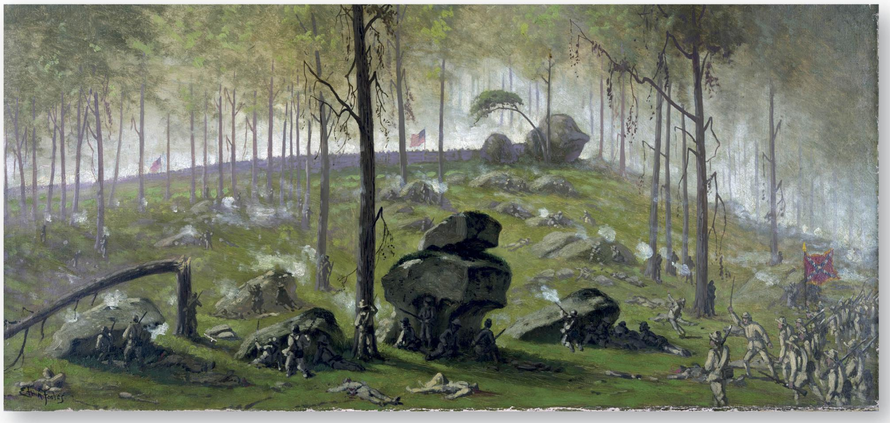
Johnson ordered his men to advance. His front brigades—Dungan's, Williams's, and Steuart's—gave a shout and headed for Geary's line. Candy's and Cobham's men—and a few of Greene's men who had not yet vacated the earthworks—received the opening assault. As the rebels approached, company commanders ordered their men to reserve fire until their foes were within easy range. In the 7th Ohio, the officers barked, "Front rank—Ready—Aim low—Fire!" The Ohioans sent a withering volley down the hill. An instant later, the rear rank followed suit. A sergeant in that regiment recalled, "those solid lines of gray were melted away before our volleys."

Struck by this well-aimed fire, Johnson's attack stopped short. Everywhere, the Confederates dropped to the ground and took shelter behind rocks and trees. They fired at the Union earthworks, hoping to outlast their opponents. Gamely, Geary's men replied in kind, trying to pick off any enemy soldiers who showed themselves.

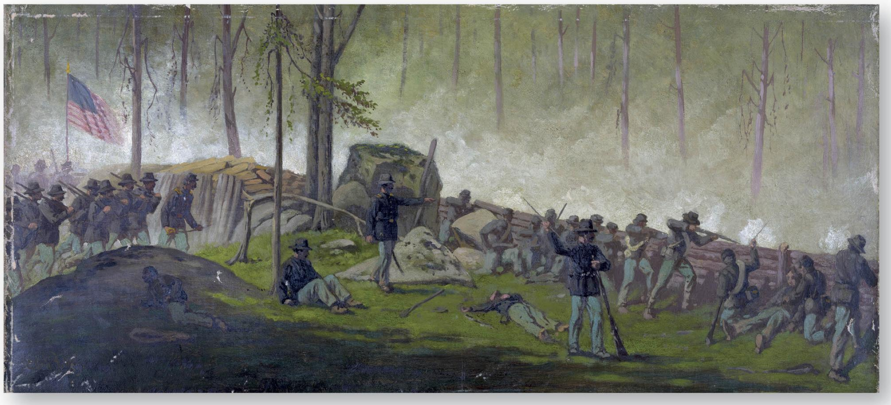
For the next two hours, the two sides blazed away. At various points during the morning battle, the dueling generals tried to break the stalemate by feeding reinforcements into it. At 7.30 a.m., Geary sent in a wave of fresh troops. He ordered his reserve regiment—the 28th Pennsylvania—and some of Greene's New Yorkers (who had now replenished their ammunition) to relieve Candy's brigade. Also, Geary requested reinforcements from Ruger, who sent a large, 600-man regiment (the 150th New York) to join in the first relief.

Meanwhile, Johnson added two new brigades to the assault—O'Neal's and Walker's—which came up behind Williams's and Steuart's stalled-out brigades. Together, they tried to restore the momentum. O'Neal's and Walker's men were stopped cold by the heavy Union rifle fire. The northernmost brigade in Johnson's reserve line—Daniel's—did not go to Dungan's assistance because Daniel considered the area in front of him too steep to ascend. Accordingly, he asked Johnson for new orders.

Once again, Geary's line held. In addition to well-made earthworks, his infantry possessed other advantages. First, Geary's men had a steady supply of ammunition. Normally, each infantryman carried forty rounds of ammunition inside his cartridge box, but before going into the breastworks, Geary's men had stuffed their pockets with spare rounds. Some regimental commanders claimed that each soldier fired over 160 rounds during the fight. Second, whenever a regiment ran out of ammunition or reported fouled barrels, Geary sent another regiment to relieve it. All morning, regiments rotated in and out of the earthworks, spending about one hour in the rear before going back to the front. This constant shuffling caused the engagement at Culp's Hill to go on unremittingly. At no point did the Union rifle fire ever slacken. Lieut. Samuel Wheelock of the 137th New York wrote home, "For nearly six hours the rattle of musketry was incessant. Not an instant did the firing cease, but as fast as those in the front exhausted their ammunition, fresh regiments would come rushing up, cheering and with flags flying, to relieve them."

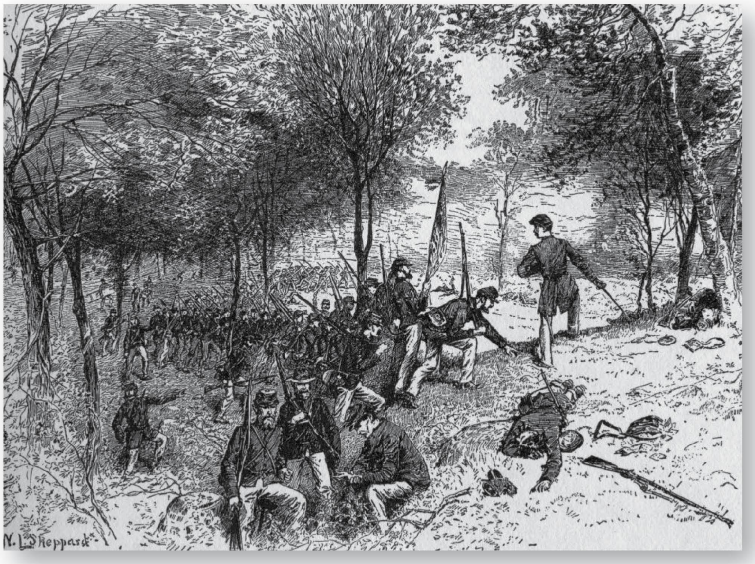


This painting by Union artist Edwin Forbes depicts Johnson's assault against the 12th Corps. Johnson's soldiers can be seen in the foreground, firing at the upper summit of Culp's Hill. The log earthworks built by the Union troops can be seen in the background with the Stars and Stripes floating above them. Accurately, this painting depicts the stalemated nature of the combat, with Johnson's troops firing from below, unable to advance up the rugged slope. (Library of Congress)



This painting by Edwin Forbes depicts a scene within the 12th Corps' earthworks. It shows a section occupied by Brig. Gen. John Geary's 2nd Division. With the advantage of cover, Geary's soldiers repulsed the attacks made by Ewell's corps, sustaining only minimal losses. After the battle, one New York soldier wrote to his local newspaper: "Early Friday morning the ball opened, and such a fire did the 12th Corps pour into the woods that no living thing that was exposed could live." (Library of Congress)

Also, Geary received another supply of fresh troops. At about 9.00 a.m., Brig. Gen. Alexander Shaler of the 6th Corps brought his brigade of 1,770 men to the rear of Geary's position. As wing commander, Slocum had gone to the 6th Corps to satisfy Geary's request for reinforcements. When Shaler's brigade arrived on the scene, it came well-stocked with ammunition. The lead regiment, the 122nd New York, carried eighty rounds per man. That regiment went into the works near the traverse, where it joined in the blood-letting. The 122nd's commander, Col. Silas Titus, recalled, "The only difficulty of the field officers was to keep [my men] from firing so fast, the guns getting so hot that many of them became useless, but were readily supplied from the great number of arms strewn over the field." Another soldier in the same regiment wrote home that, "Our boys … piled the dead behind the rebel works, ceasing firing twice at command, to let squads of rebel prisoners come in… [O]ur muskets got so hot that the hand could not be borne upon them, and there was great danger of premature discharges."



This illustration by Confederate veteran William Ludwell Sheppard depicts the 29th Pennsylvania from Geary's White Star Division advancing into the traverse at the foot of Culp's Hill. Every hour, the frontline regiments in Geary's division moved into the woods behind Culp's Hill to clean rifle barrels and replenish ammunition. Meanwhile, fresh regiments moved into the earthworks to replace those that came off the line. The 29th Pennsylvania occupied the earthworks from 6.45 to 11.00 a.m. The regiment sustained sixty-six losses out of 357 officers and men. (Public domain)

At 10.00 a.m., Johnson ordered one final push, sending orders to Daniel's, Walker's, and Steuart's brigades to make an all-out assault. Ewell had received word that Longstreet's assault against the Union center would be ready to go soon, so he told Johnson that he needed to prolong the fighting in order to coordinate with it. Both Daniel and Steuart protested. They had seen enough to know that another attack had no hope of success. But orders came back telling them to advance. They had to keep up the pressure to help Longstreet.

Steuart responded quickly. He formed five regiments into a line that ran perpendicular to the stone wall that ran along the northeast side of Spangler's meadow. His men faced northwest, looking directly at four of Geary's regiments. Here, about 250 yards of open meadow separated the two hostile positions. From the Confederate perspective, the ground sloped downward, forming a saddle between the upper and lower hills. Then, for the last fifty yards, it ascended slightly before reaching the traverse. An officer in the 1st Maryland (C.S.) Battalion warned his men, "Use your bayonets, boys; don't fire." Steuart took position in front of the Marylanders, waving a brightly polished sword. He ordered, "Attention, battalion, forward march!"

The appearance of Steuart's men atop the lower summit caught the attention of Geary's troops. In fact, they started firing on them before Steuart ordered his men to advance. The rifle fire proved withering and accurate. Maj. Robert P. Dechert of the 29th Pennsylvania recalled, "Nothing could surpass the regularity with which the enemy advanced, their arms at right shoulder shift, dressing as if on parade to fill the vacancies in their diminishing ranks occasioned by the destructive fire which ploughed into their solid columns." Pvt. D. Ridgely Howard of the 1st (C.S.) Maryland, agreed. He later wrote:

> The Federals opened on us from front, left flank, and rear; and the firing was terrific, increasing with each step we took. Still we pressed on until near their breastworks, when turning my head to the right, I saw a sight which was fearful to behold. It appeared to me as if the whole of my company was being swept away by the awful shower of shot and shell flying around us.

The Confederate attack never reached its objective. In a few minutes, Steuart's line melted away. The left flank of his brigade advanced into the open meadow (today called Pardee Field) taking enfilading artillery fire from the Union batteries on Powers Hill. After only a few minutes of this punishment, these men retired into the trees from where they had come. Meanwhile, the right flank of Steuart's brigade fell apart when it received a volley from Geary's infantry. A twice-wounded Marylander, Sgt. George Thomas, argued, "A burst of flame and shot and shell seemed to sweep the devoted band from earth. To advance was impossible." Those who could still walk scrambled to the rear. Those who were hit could do nothing but wave white handkerchiefs and surrender.

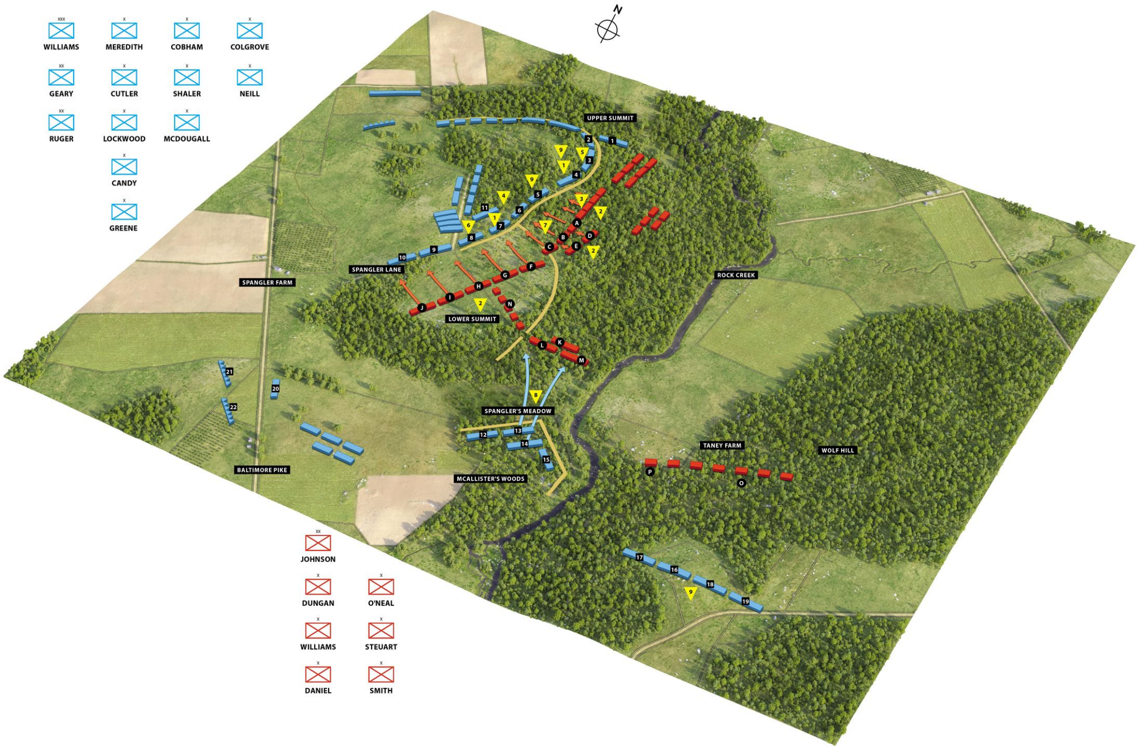
These six officers belonged to the 2nd Division, 12th Corps. All of them fought at Gettysburg. Note the “White Star” insignia adorning their headgear. They are (left to right): Capt. Thomas Elliott (60th New York), Capt. Lewis R. Stegman (102nd New York), Capt. Benjamin F. Zarracher (29th Pennsylvania), Capt. James Fitzpatrick (28th Pennsylvania), Capt. Silas Pierson (137th New York), and Capt. Caleb Greenawalt (28th Pennsylvania). (Public domain)

As Steuart’s survivors regrouped atop the lower hill, Daniel’s and Walker’s brigades made an equally forlorn attack. Daniel had earlier complained about the position assigned to his command, telling Johnson that the northern slope of Culp’s Hill could not be taken. Accordingly, Johnson repositioned Daniel’s men on the right of Steuart, confronting the ravine between the two summits. Daniel was supposed to advance in tandem with Steuart, but by the time Daniel got his men into position, Steuart’s attack was already over. Intrepidly, Daniel’s men advanced anyway, catching fire from Geary’s men along the upper summit. Pvt. Henry Brown of the 28th Pennsylvania remembered Daniel’s charge as an attack delivered by a “body of the bravest of men, for they realized the danger and yet, with nothing but death before them, they obeyed the command of a stoic or madman as he took position on foot in their front, accompanied with his staff."

CULP'S HILL, THE LATE MORNING ATTACKS

As the sun neared its zenith, the infantry combat on Culp's Hill reached its climax. In a desperate effort to coordinate with Lieut. Gen. James Longstreet's assault against the Union center, Maj. Gen. Edward Johnson ordered a final series of attacks directed against Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams's 12th Corps. Marshaling three brigades for the final push, Johnson's division made a desperate bid to dislodge the Union right flank. After an hour of fighting, these brigades fell back in disorder. Not only had Johnson's assaults failed to break the Union line, but they did not occur simultaneously with any other Confederate offensives. The bird's-eye view depicts the battle action from 9.30 to 11.00 a.m.

Note: the base map covers an area of approximately 1,848 yards by 1,586 yards


WILLIAMS
MEREDITH
COBHAM
COLGROVE
GEARY
CUTLER
SHALER
NEILL
RUGER
LOCKWOOD
MCDOUGALL
CANDY
GREENE
UPPER SUMMIT
SPANGLER LANE
SPANGLER FARM
LOWER SUMMIT
ROCK CREEK
SPANGLER'S MEADOW
TANEY FARM
WOLF HILL
BALTIMORE PIKE
MCALLISTER'S WOODS
JOHNSON
DUNGAN
O'NEAL
WILLIAMS
STEUART
DANIEL
SMITH

UNION

Union infantry

1. 66th Ohio
2. 1st Maryland (Eastern Shore) (5 companies)
3. 150th New York

4. 7th Ohio
5. 1st Maryland (Eastern Shore) (4 companies)
6. 28th Pennsylvania
7. 29th Pennsylvania
8. 122nd New York
9. 5th Ohio
10. 147th Pennsylvania
11. 1st Maryland (Potomac Home Brigade)
12. 3rd Wisconsin
13. 2nd Massachusetts
14. 27th Indiana
15. 13th New Jersey
16. 7th Maine
17. 49th New York
18. 43rd New York
19. 61st Pennsylvania
20. 107th New York

Union artillery

21. Battery F, 4th U.S. Artillery (Rugg) [6 guns]
22. Battery K, 5th U.S. Artillery (Kinzie) [6 guns]

CONFEDERATE

Confederate infantry

A. 2nd North Carolina Battalion
B. 45th North Carolina
C. 43rd North Carolina
D. 53rd North Carolina
E. 32nd North Carolina
F. 3rd North Carolina
G. 1st Maryland Battalion
H. 37th Virginia
I. 23rd Virginia
J. 1st North Carolina
K. 31st Virginia
L. 49th Virginia
M. 52nd Virginia

Confederate infantry skirmishers

N. 10th Virginia
O. 2nd Virginia
P. 1st North Carolina

EVENTS

(Times are approximate.)

1. 9.30 a.m. The 7th Ohio relieves the 149th New York on the upper summit. The 29th Ohio relieves the 137th New York on the upper summit.

2. 10.00–10.30 a.m. Maj. Gen. Edward Johnson orders his final assault, consisting of Steuart's, Walker's, and Daniel's brigades. Steuart's brigade attacks first and is repulsed.

3. 10.00–11.00 a.m. Walker's brigade attacks and becomes trapped below the Union earthworks, losing over eighty men captured.

4. 10.15 a.m. The 137th New York relieves the 29th Ohio on the upper summit.

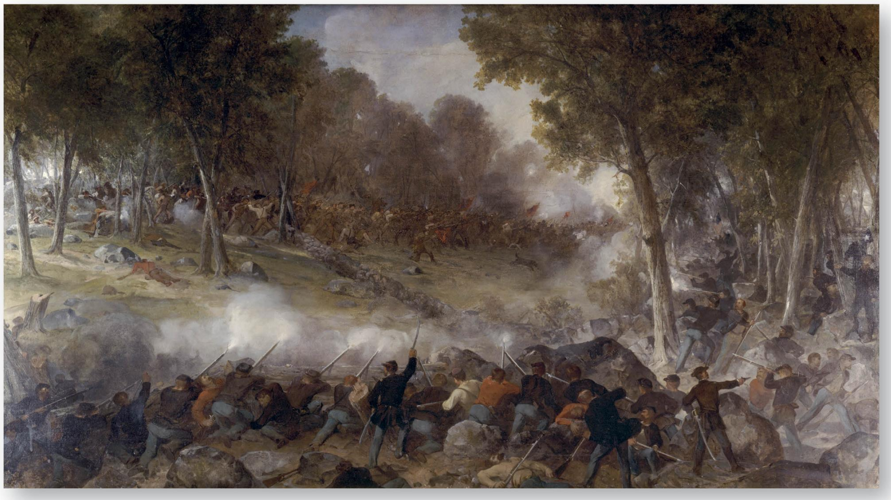
5. 10.20 a.m. The 150th New York relieves the 78th and 102nd New York on the upper summit.

6. 10.30 a.m. The 122nd New York relieves the 109th Pennsylvania at the traverse.

7. 10.30–11.00 a.m. Arriving late, Daniel's brigade makes its last attack against the upper summit and is repulsed.

8. 10.30–11.00 a.m. Two regiments from Col. Colgrove's brigade (the 2nd Massachusetts and the 27th Indiana) attack across Spangler's meadow and are repulsed by Smith's brigade. Smith's brigade counterattacks, and is, in turn, repulsed by Colgrove's brigade.

9. 11.00 a.m. The 1st Maryland Potomac Home Brigade relieves the 29th Pennsylvania inside the traverse. Five companies from the 1st Maryland (Eastern Shore) relieve the 28th Pennsylvania near the traverse. Four companies from the 1st Maryland (Eastern Shore) join the 150th New York on the upper summit, relieving the 60th New York. Brig. Gen. Thomas Neill's brigade (3rd Brigade, 2nd Division, 6th Corps) skirmishes with the 1st North Carolina and 2nd Virginia on Wolf Hill.



This segment of Peter F. Rothermel's 1870 painting, "Repulse of General Johnson's Division by General Geary's White Star Division," depicts the attack of Steuart's brigade, seen in the background descending Culp's Hill's lower summit. Col. George Cobham's Pennsylvanians occupy the foreground behind the log traverse. In the right background, Rothermel painted the 1st Maryland Battalion's canine mascot, Grace, who was killed in the attack. Union officer Thomas L. Kane witnessed her death: "I myself first saw [her] on three legs going between our own and the men in Gray on the ground as though looking for a dead master, or seeking on which side [she] might find an explanation of the tragedy [she] witnessed intelligible to [her] canine apprehension. [She] licked someone's hand, they said, after [she] was perfectly riddled. Regarding [her] as the truly Christian minded being on either side, I ordered [her] to be honorably buried." (Courtesy of The State Museum of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission)

Daniel's North Carolinians and Walker's Virginians charged over ground already cluttered with the dead and dying. Geary's men steadied their rifles between the earthwork and the head-log, watching the Confederate commander—whoever he was—as he screamed wildly, "On! On!" Pvt. Brown recalled, "They are within a pace or two of the works when a thousand fingers press a thousand triggers, and all humanity is forgotten in the haste to load and kill. A thousand reel and fall. Then a perfect roar of musketry greets the ear." As with Steuart's brigade, this attack stalled in front of the Union earthworks and many of the prostrate Confederates had to drop their weapons and throw up their hands. They entered Union lines, not as conquerors but as prisoners.

When Daniel's and Walker's men began surrendering, the staff officer who led the brigade into position, Maj. Benjamin W. Leigh, rode his horse into the ravine. With sword drawn, he began swatting Daniel's soldiers, imploring them to rally and continue the attack. Sgt. Martin Olmsted of the 102nd New York observed what happened next: "Probably 100 muskets reserved their fire, watching this daring horseman, when all at once he appeared plainly outlined in a small cleared spot, and a score or more of muskets rang out in an instant. Both horse and rider went to earth in the twinkling of an eye." Colonel William Creighton of the 7th Ohio, whose regiment was back in the earthworks for its second stint, called for his men to cease firing. Seventy-eight Confederates (including seven officers) advanced and surrendered. By noon, after more than seven hours, the uninterrupted fighting on Geary's front finally sputtered out.

His division's élan thoroughly spent, Johnson collected his forces behind the lower summit in preparation for a re-crossing of Rock Creek. As this happened, a Union counterattack emerged from the far end of the line. This came from Ruger's 3rd Brigade, commanded by Col. Silas Colgrove. As previously mentioned, Ruger's morning attack had not gone well. The swampy terrain south of Culp's Hill and the misdirected fire delivered by the 12th Corps artillery had stalled one of Ruger's brigades. However, Col. Colgrove's brigade managed to recover its portion of the earthworks without facing enemy resistance. In fact, even before the 12th Corps began its advance, Colgrove's regiments retook their entrenchments inside McAllister's Woods, a small thicket that ran along Rock Creek. For several hours, Colgrove's regiments sat inside these woods, tightly coiled up, awaiting the outcome of the battle.

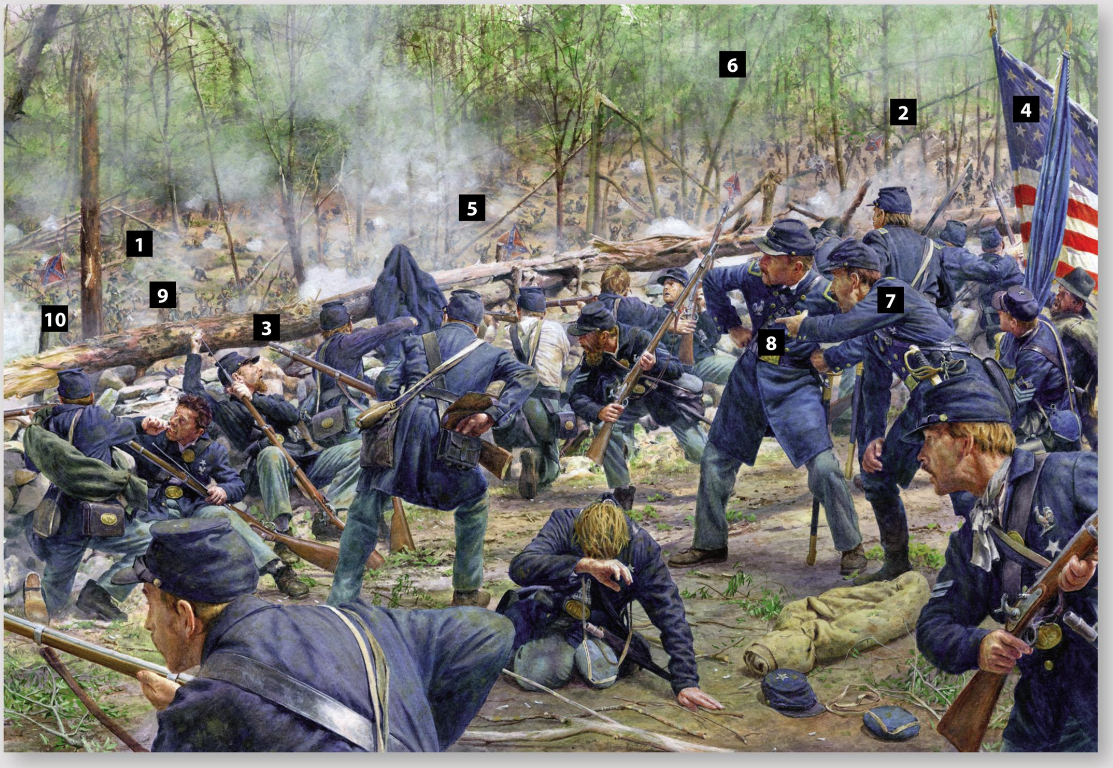
Sometime around 10.30 a.m., as Steuart's and Daniel's brigades were in the midst of their fight, Colgrove received an order to advance. The order originated from Slocum, who sensed an opportunity to sweep up Johnson's men while they were in turmoil. For some unknown reason, Slocum bypassed Williams and took these orders directly to Ruger, the division commander. In turn, Ruger sent a staff officer to deliver the order to Colgrove. According to Colgrove, the staff officer said, "Advance your line immediately," without offering context. Colgrove's men did not have far to go to reach the Confederate position. Looking north from McAllister's Woods, Colgrove observed a small marsh formed by a rivulet that flowed into Rock Creek. The marsh was about 100 yards wide and marked by a spring owned by the Spangler family. Beyond the spring, the rocky slopes of Culp's Hill rose sharply. Colgrove did not believe such a narrow space allowed him to advance with his entire brigade, but only two regiments at a time. Further, he did not believe he could send out skirmishers, for they stood no chance in an unprotected meadow. Colgrove selected the 2nd Massachusetts and 27th Indiana to make the assault. They formed up behind the breastworks, fixed bayonets, and at the command, "Forward, double-quick!" they leaped over the earthworks and charged at the Confederate line with deafening cheers.

Unfortunately, the two Union regiments attacked the only Confederate brigade that had not been committed to the assault against Culp's Hill. Brig. Gen. William Smith's Virginia brigade held the extreme left of Johnson's line, anchoring the division to the banks of Rock Creek. Concealed by thick woods, Smith's men quietly observed Colgrove's attack and waited until the Yankees reached halfway across the marsh before opening fire.

Colgrove called the first Confederate volley "one of the most terrible fires I have ever witnessed." Despite the ferocity of the gunfire, the 2nd Massachusetts reached a line of boulders at the southern base of Culp's Hill. The soldiers from that regiment took shelter and began shooting at Steuart's men who were milling atop the lower summit. Unfortunately, the other regiment, the 27th Indiana, did not get as far. It traversed a longer section of the marsh, and thus, it took heavier losses along the way. Eventually, Colgrove recalled the Indianans. As he reported, "It became evident to me that scarcely a man could live to gain the position of the enemy."

Maj. Benjamin Watkins Leigh came from a prominent slave-owning family in Mecklenburg County, Virginia. At Gettysburg, he served as the chief of staff for Maj. Gen. Edward Johnson. During the final assault against Culp's Hill, Leigh witnessed a portion of 4th Virginia surrendering to the 7th Ohio. In a fury, Leigh rode out to the Virginians and began swatting them, knocking down any white flags. As he closed the distance to Union lines, gunfire from the Ohioans killed him. After the battle, Union soldiers brought his corpse into their lines and they gave it a solemn burial. After the war, in April 1866, Leigh's family retrieved his remains and laid them to rest in Shockoe Hill Cemetery in Richmond. (American Civil War Museum, under the management of Virginia Museum of History & Culture (0985.13.02120))

After the 27th Indiana returned to McAllister's Woods, the 2nd Massachusetts had to follow suit. Smith's Confederates attempted pursuit, but Colgrove's two remaining regiments—the 3rd Wisconsin and 13th New Jersey—returned fire from the earthworks, blunting that attack. When it became apparent that they were facing the same style of slaughter they had just inflicted, Smith's Virginians beat a hasty retreat back to their defensive line on the north side of the marsh. By noon, the meadow around Spangler's spring was full of dead and wounded men from both sides. Colgrove's two regiments had lost 246 out of 655 officers and men. Smith’s Virginians had lost 213 out of 806.



CULP’S HILL

Shortly after 10.00 a.m., Maj. Gen. Edward Johnson’s division made its final push against Culp’s Hill. This assault had been going on for about four hours, and, in all that time, Johnson’s men had yet to budge the Union defense. With ammunition running short and his men’s patience rapidly deteriorating, Johnson ordered three worn-out brigades—Brig. Gen. James Walker’s (**1**), Brig. Gen. George H. Steuart’s, and Brig. Gen. Junius Daniel’s (**2**)—to overrun the Union entrenchments and end the battle once and for all.

It proved to be a tall order. Nine Union infantry regiments occupied this sector of the line, and all of them benefited from a sturdy line of earthworks. The earthworks were chest high and possessed a head-log (**3**). On the outside, the Yankees reinforced their works with stones to make them bulletproof. A day earlier, Brig. Gen. John Geary’s infantry had grumbled because of the backbreaking labor required to complete these trenches; but now, they thanked their lucky stars for the protection they provided.

In the middle of Geary’s line, the 7th Ohio Infantry (**4**) held a position overlooking the ravine (**5**) between Culp’s Hill’s upper and lower summits (**6**). Recruited from Cleveland in the summer of 1861, the 7th Ohio had already passed through several of the war’s bloodiest battles: Cross Lanes, Port Republic, Cedar Mountain, Antietam, and Chancellorsville. At Gettysburg, it numbered only 282 officers and men. Known as the “Roosters” because of their distinctive brass rooster badges (and also for their tradition of crowing before every battle) the soldiers of the 7th Ohio had just returned to the earthworks for a second stint. Every enlisted man carried a fresh supply of ammunition. The 7th Ohio’s second in command, Lieut. Col. Orrin J. Crane (**7**), had taken the initiative to pass out ammunition to the whole division. Prior to the attack, Crane told a Pennsylvania soldier: “Help yourself, White Star, and make good use of it, for the prisoners we have say Ewell is going to break through here if it takes every damned man he has.” Picking up a box of ammunition, the Pennsylvania soldier replied, “If he comes, we will give him the best we have in the shop!”

At 10.15 a.m., Walker’s Virginia brigade and Daniel’s North Carolina Brigade began crossing the ravine, making their bid to seize the hill. Small arms fire from Geary’s infantry stopped this attack cold. Walker’s and Daniel’s Confederates went to ground, taking shelter behind boulders and trees. From their disadvantageous position, the rebels fired upwards at the defending Union troops, hoping that Steuart’s brigade might relieve the pressure on them. (Unfortunately, Steuart’s men had already been repulsed; they were in no position to help.) For a half-hour, the two sides blazed away at each other. One Confederate survivor, Pvt. Louis Leon of the 53rd North Carolina, wrote in his diary:

> This day none will forget, that participated in the fight. It was truly awful how fast, how very fast, did our poor boys fall by our sides—almost as fast as the leaves that fell as cannon and musket balls hit them, as they flew on their deadly errand. You could see one with his head shot off, others cut in two, then one with his brain oozing out, one with his leg off, others shot through the heart. Then you would hear some poor friend or foe crying for water, or for “God’s sake” to kill him. You would see some of your comrades, shot through the leg, lying between the lines, asking his friends to take him out, but no one could get to his relief, and you would have to leave him there, perhaps to die, or, at best, to become a prisoner.

At about 11.00 a.m., the Confederates began running short of ammunition, and those who had advanced the closest to the Union line surrendered. One of them raised a white flag, which induced the 7th Ohio’s commander, Col. William R. Creighton (**8**), to order his men to cease firing.

At the same moment, a mounted Confederate officer—Maj. Benjamin W. Leigh (the chief of staff for Maj. Gen. Johnson) (**9**)—rode onto the scene, making a last-ditch effort to stop the surrender from occurring. Upon seeing Leigh riding among the surrendering troops, shaming them back to into combat, the Union infantry reopened fire. The volley riddled Leigh and his horse, and both fell dead in front of the earthworks.

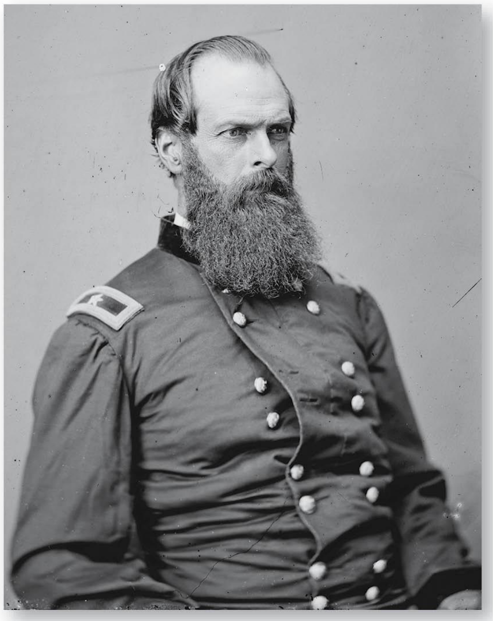
With Leigh dead, seventy-eight Confederates—most of them from the 4th Virginia—raised their hands and surrendered (**10**). Meanwhile, the remaining Confederates receded into the woods. Although skirmishing lasted into the afternoon, Johnson’s attack was over. At Gettysburg, his division had lost 2,002 officers and men (out of 6,433). The bulk of his casualties had fallen on the slopes of Culp’s Hill on the morning of July 3.

In its defense of the hill, the 7th Ohio had lost only one killed and seventeen wounded. The earthworks had been a decisive factor, providing Geary’s division with sufficient protection to withstand the repeated attacks. Col. Creighton also believed his men’s gumption had been a crucial element. Speaking for many 12th Corps officers, Creighton reported: “I feel it my duty to mention the officers and men under

> my command, but when each and every man went forward to the contest without any exceptions whatever, I will merely say that every officer and man performed his duty manfully, every order being obeyed promptly.”

One final skirmish closed out the fighting on Culp’s Hill. East of Rock Creek, a brigade from the 6th Corps—Brig. Gen. Thomas H. Neill’s—moved into position near the John Taney farm. Earlier that morning, Neill’s brigade had been occupying a position near Powers Hill. But Slocum became concerned the Confederate attack might transform into a turning movement that could circumnavigate the army’s right flank. Slocum took charge of Neill’s brigade and ordered it to take possession of Wolf Hill, a wooded rise north of the pike. Neill took four regiments on this expedition. When they reached the Taney farm, they discovered a line of Confederate skirmishers about 200 yards away. (This line belonged to the 2nd Virginia and four companies of the 1st North Carolina.) For about an hour, the two sides popped away, and eventually, the Confederates gave up the position. Neill’s brigade lost two killed, eleven wounded, and two missing. The 2nd Virginia reported only one man killed, and although it was not certain where he had fallen, he was most likely killed in this skirmish. Coincidentally, the fallen soldier’s name was Pvt. John Wesley Culp, a former Pennsylvanian. Culp’s Hill was owned by his cousin, Henry Culp. In a sad quirk of fate, Pvt. Culp had returned home to die on his family’s ancestral land.

Johnson’s division remained in place for another hour. About noon, he issued orders to retreat. The sighting of Neill’s brigade worried him. A Union force of unknown size had suddenly appeared on his left flank and he needed time to prepare for what might come behind it. Over the next half hour, Johnson’s ambulatory soldiers waded across Rock Creek and collected atop Benner’s Hill. Yet, hundreds of other Confederate soldiers remained on the Union side of the creek. Steuart’s, Dungan’s, and Walker’s brigades maintained a strong line of skirmishers along the eastern base of the hill. They kept skirmishing with the 12th Corps until after dark. And of course, Johnson could not evacuate hundreds of wounded men who fell too close to the enemy line. Sadly, they had to be left behind.



Brig. Gen. John White Geary commanded the 2nd Division, 12th Corps—commonly known as the “White Star Division.” Geary’s troops defended the upper summit of Culp’s Hill. A towering politician with a stentorian voice, Geary was notorious for seeking undue newspaper attention. But at Gettysburg, he was well within his rights to demand applause. On July 4, he wrote his wife, Mary: “Thank God for so glorious a victory and that too, over the very troops … we fought at Chancellorsville. Our prospects to drive out speedily the rebels is very good and I think in another week there will not be a rebel in the state.” (Library of Congress)

Johnson’s losses during the July 3 attack are hard to determine with accuracy. The division suffered 2,002 casualties overall, but perhaps as many as 600 or 800 fell during the fighting on July 2. The three supporting brigades—Smith’s, Daniel’s, and O’Neal’s—likely suffered 1,230 losses between them on July 3, which puts the total estimated loss for the morning assault at 2,530 men, or thirty percent of Johnson’s total force. In the aftermath, Johnson believed that Lee had given him an impossible task. He wrote, “The enemy were too securely intrenched and in too great numbers to be dislodged by the force at my command.”

Lieut. Col. Charles Redington Mudge, Harvard Class of 1860, led the 2nd Massachusetts in its forlorn charge across Spangler's meadow. When Col. Silas Colgrove's courier reached Mudge, he expressed astonishment that the 12th Corps generals would even consider such an attack. Mudge asked, "Are you sure that is the order?" When the courier replied affirmatively, Mudge said, "Well it is murder, but it's the order." During the charge, Mudge was shot below the throat and killed. "It was a fierce fight," recollected another officer in the regiment; "we made one charge which was the bravest thing I ever saw." After the battle, Mudge's family recovered his remains, burying them in St. Stephen's Episcopal Churchyard in Lynn, Massachusetts. Mudge's regiment was repulsed, losing 136 out of 316 officers and men. (Library of Congress)

At 1.00 p.m., with Johnson's Confederates now mainly on the other side of the creek, Ruger's men finally reclaimed their abandoned earthworks. The 20th Connecticut was first to regain that position, followed by the 123rd New York, and in short order, by the rest of Col. Archibald McDougall's brigade. At the time, many of the bluecoats now concluded that, in defending Culp's Hill, they had, in effect, won the battle. Sgt. Fayette Hale of the 123rd New York wrote home, "Here, on the 3d of July, was rung the death-knell of Lee's hopes and of slavery … this was the time when 'Greek met Greek.'—The field of Gettysburgh [*sic*] for many centuries, will be redolent with historical reminiscences and sacred beyond any soil made red with the blood of freedom's martyrs since the opening of the 'Great Rebellion.'"

Losses in the 12th Corps were comparatively light. Williams had taken 9,788 officers and men into the fight but lost only 1,082. The heaviest losses fell upon Colgrove's brigade, which endured a hellish charge across Spangler's lower meadow, and also upon Greene's brigade, which had been hit hard during the previous evening's night attack. For the infantry that occupied the trenches on the morning of July 3, the losses were practically negligible. For instance, the 7th Ohio, which endured five hours of combat atop the upper summit, lost only one killed and seventeen wounded out of 265 officers and men. Nearby, the 109th Pennsylvania fought for six hours straight (4.00 to 10.00 a.m.), but it lost only three killed, six wounded, and ten missing out of 149 officers and men. Indeed, the 12th Corps' field fortifications saved the lives of many bluecoats.

Williams credited his men for their remarkable courage. With little exaggeration, he proclaimed, "Officers and men, almost without exception, behaved with coolness, steadiness and valor, and throughout this great battle upheld with signal fidelity the proud reputation of the corps." In the immediate aftermath, the 12th Corps rank and file felt the same euphoria. A Pennsylvania soldier wrote his father, "what do the people of the North think now of the Old Army of the Potomac[?] have they not proved to the world that it has not been their fault that they have not won fields before[?]" A Connecticut soldier jotted in his journal, "Who lives that can portray the history of the Army of the Potomac for the work it has done in the last three days? All honor to the heroes that it is composed of."

The morning battle for Culp's Hill may not have determined the final outcome of the Battle of Gettysburg, but it helped ruin Lee's plans for July 3.

EAST CAVALRY FIELD

As the fighting atop Culp's Hill wrapped up, a separate cavalry action occurred four miles east of Gettysburg. Maj. Gen. James E. B. Stuart's mounted division—which had been absent from the Army of Northern Virginia for the past ten days—finally got into the fray.

Brig. Gen. David McMurtrie Gregg commanded the 2nd Division, Cavalry Corps, the unit tasked with defending the intersection of the Hanover Road and the Low Dutch Road. A modest officer who shunned limelight, Gregg orchestrated a masterful defense of the Union right flank. Although outnumbered and dealing with fatigued mounts, Gregg's troopers repulsed Stuart's division. In the aftermath, one of Gregg's officers boasted that "Gregg's fight at Gettysburg was the finest cavalry fight of the war." (Library of Congress)

The previous evening, Stuart had received instructions from Lee, and on the morning of the 3rd, he moved to carry them out. In his action report, Stuart said that Lee gave him instructions to form on the left of Ewell's flank and move "in advance of it." Lee's official report said almost nothing about Stuart's assignment; however, in one line, he suggested that Stuart's mission was primarily defensive, aimed at protecting the army's left flank. This made sense, given the location to which Lee sent Stuart: a wide, open plain over which the Hanover Road passed. The Army of the Potomac had no use for the Hanover Road, but quite problematically, it ran in the rear of Ewell's corps. Lee realized that if any Union cavalry occupied it, Stuart would have to drive them off. He could not allow the enemy to move into the army's rear.

It just so happened that Stuart discovered the exact situation that Lee had feared. Union cavalry were, indeed, posted along the Hanover Road. Stuart's division approached the road from the north, via a farm lane that ran southeast from the York Road. Before noon, Stuart's vanguard reached a low, wooded ridge called Cress Ridge. There, Stuart deployed his horse artillery—fourteen guns—and a brigade of dismounted troopers under command of Lieut. Col. Vincent Witcher. From atop Cress Ridge, Stuart looked southward across a 123-acre farm owned by John Rummel. Two miles distant, he spied Union cavalry in sizable numbers. Stuart had four brigades with him, about 6,600 officers and men, which gave him a numerical advantage, although he did not know it at the time. But numbers did not matter to him. Stuart planned to descend upon the Union cavalry with a surprise attack, driving them from the position. As Stuart superintended the dispersal of his division, two of his brigades emerged prematurely from Cress Woods, disclosing his position to the Union cavalry. In a few minutes, the Yankee horsemen turned toward it, and with that, the fight was on.

The Union cavalry belonged to Brig. Gen. David Gregg's 2nd Division of the Army of the Potomac's cavalry corps. On July 2, Gregg's troopers had endured a grueling march to Gettysburg, and in the evening, they clashed with Ewell's men at Brinkerhoff Ridge. Ever since, Gregg's men had been operating in the right-rear of the Union line. Before noon, Maj. Gen. Howard sent a dispatch to Gregg, warning him to be on the lookout for Stuart. Howard's signal corps station near East Cemetery Hill had spotted Stuart's movement just as it began, identifying the column as soon as it turned onto the York Road. The column had since disappeared from sight, but Howard deduced that it might be coming Gregg's way. When Stuart's division made its appearance atop Cress Ridge, Gregg determined to stop it. Gregg later reported that a Confederate attack at this location, if successful, would have resulted in "most serious consequences."

This turn-of-the-twentieth-century photograph depicts East Cavalry Field. The viewer is looking northwest to the area where the cavalry melee occurred. The Rummel farm can be seen in the left background. Cress Woods—where Stuart deployed his horse artillery—can be seen on the horizon at right. (Penn State University Libraries)

Gregg never explained what those consequences might be, but he knew his position needed to be held. Gregg's troopers protected an essential intersection, the juncture of the Hanover Road and the Low Dutch Road (sometimes known as the Salem Church Road). If Stuart's cavalry gained that intersection, the rebel horsemen could move southwest and claim the Baltimore Pike, the Army of the Potomac's line of retreat. Much like Alpheus Williams, Gregg had no choice but to attack.

Nineteen-year-old 2nd Lieut. William Brooke Rawle served in the 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry. During the engagement at East Cavalry Field he participated in the charge led by Capt. William Miller, cutting Stuart's column in two. After the war, Rawle became one of the leading historians on the fight at East Cavalry Field. When he delivered an oration at the dedication of the Cavalry Monumental Shaft on October 15, 1884, he reminded his listeners that the Union cavalry had played a major part in the victory at Gettysburg: "We cavalrymen have always held that we saved the day at the most critical moment of the battle of Gettysburg… I know that it has not been the custom among historians to give us credit for having done so, nor, except very recently, to give us credit for having done anything." (Library of Congress)

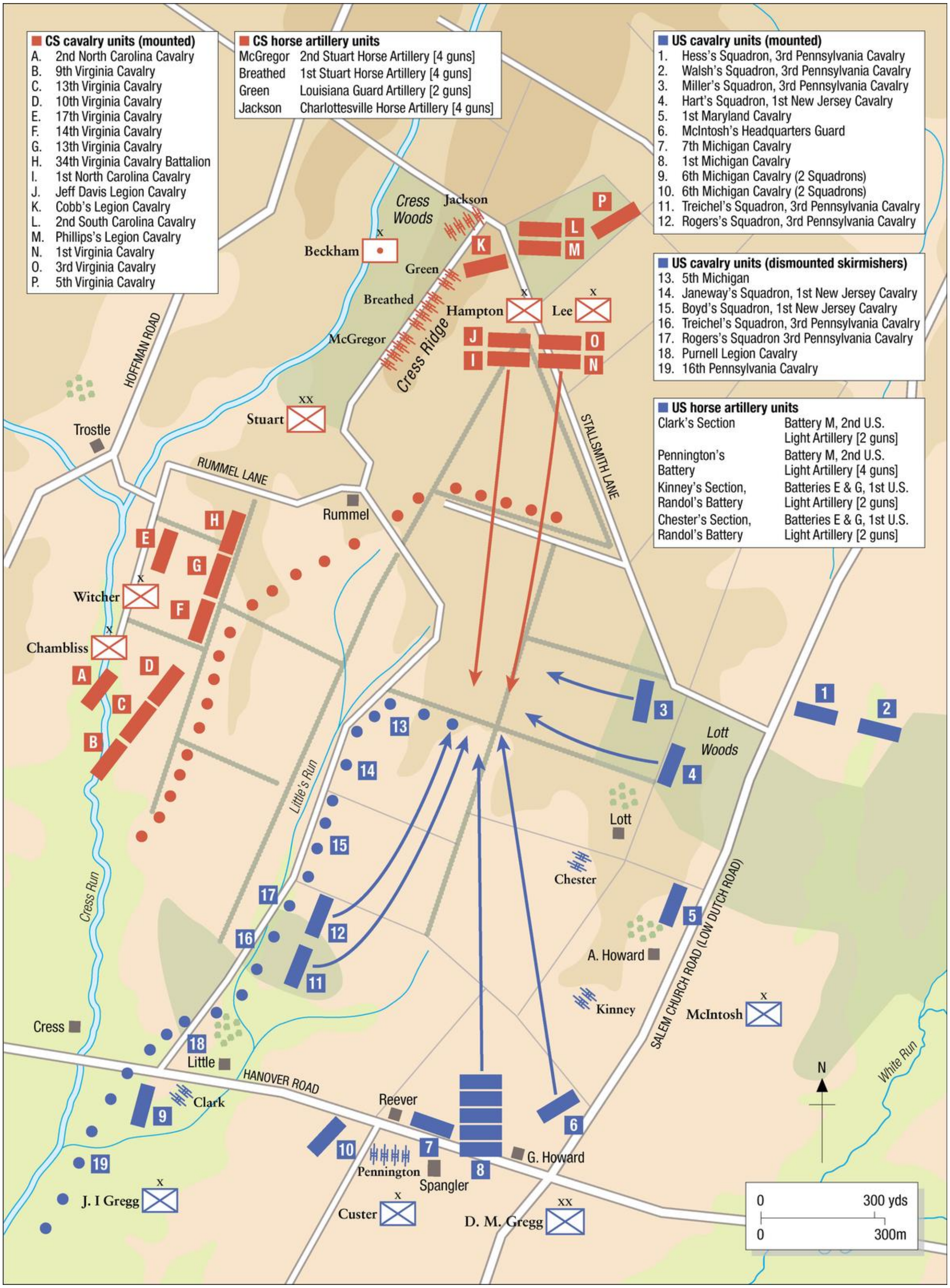
Gregg possessed three brigades: Col. John B. McIntosh's, Col. J. Irvin Gregg's, and Brig. Gen. George A. Custer's. The last one—Custer's—did not normally belong to Gregg's division, and in fact, Custer had received orders to follow the Low Dutch Road to a rendezvous with his division commander, Brig. Gen. H. Judson Kilpatrick. But when Gregg's skirmishers located Stuart, Gregg asked Custer to stick around and operate under his command. Courteously, Custer agreed. With these forces at his disposal, Gregg possessed about 4,700 men.

Stuart’s first move involved making contact with his dismounted skirmishers. Lieut. Col. Witcher’s brigade provided these troops. On foot, Witcher’s men sallied forth from Cress Woods, heading toward the Rummel farm. There, they encountered a line of dismounted Union skirmishers who belonged to the 1st New Jersey Cavalry and to two squadrons of the 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry. Witcher’s men did not last long. Due to a supply oversight, they possessed only ten rounds per man. After they expended their ammunition, Witcher pulled his men back to the woods. Stuart’s horse artillery pulled out as well, the gunners having found Gregg’s artillery too much to deal with. Union horse artillery near the Hanover Road had much longer range than some of the Confederate cannon. These issues foiled Stuart’s initial scheme. He had hoped to strike Gregg with his right flank. But due to the withdrawal of Witcher and the horse artillery, Stuart had to formulate a different plan.

At 1.00 p.m., Stuart deployed another wave of dismounted troops, about 1,500 men (a mix of men from Chambliss’s, Hampton’s, and Fitzhugh Lee’s brigades), sending them southward from Cress Woods. These Confederates reached the Rummel farm, driving out the 1st New Jersey and the 3rd Pennsylvania. But then, the new line of Confederate skirmishers halted when it encountered 500 dismounted men from the 5th Michigan Cavalry. Unlike the other Union skirmishers, these Michigan troopers possessed high-tech weaponry, seven-shot magazine-fed rifles designed by the Spencer Repeating Rifle Company. Although the 5th Michigan engaged a larger foe, the rate of fire from the Spencers offset the disparity. Once again, the engagement stalemated.

Gregg made the next move. He became worried that the new line of rebel skirmishers might reach the Low Dutch Road and slip around his right flank. To send the rebels scurrying for cover, he ordered Custer to send the 7th Michigan Cavalry in a mounted charge. In typical fashion, Custer led the attack himself, mounted in front, with the regiment deployed behind him in a column of squadrons. With a thunderous gallop, the 7th Michigan charged from its position along the Hanover Road, crossing the fields of the Jacob Lott farm. The column unexpectedly halted when it came upon a post-and-rail fence. Amid close-range fire, a cluster of Michigan cavalrymen at the front of the column flung themselves from their saddles and proceeded to dismantle the fence. Once these Michiganders opened a hole, their mounted comrades charged through it, four at a time. Capt. G. A.

Armstrong of the 7th Michigan remembered, “The enemy recoiled and withdrew only as we cut or shot them down or rode over them.”


🟥 CS cavalry units (mounted)
A. 2nd North Carolina Cavalry
B. 9th Virginia Cavalry
C. 13th Virginia Cavalry
D. 10th Virginia Cavalry
E. 17th Virginia Cavalry
F. 14th Virginia Cavalry
G. 13th Virginia Cavalry
H. 34th Virginia Cavalry Battalion
I. 1st North Carolina Cavalry
J. Jeff Davis Legion Cavalry
K. Cobb's Legion Cavalry
L. 2nd South Carolina Cavalry
M. Phillips's Legion Cavalry
N. 1st Virginia Cavalry
O. 3rd Virginia Cavalry
P. 5th Virginia Cavalry
🟥 CS horse artillery units
McGregor 2nd Stuart Horse Artillery [4 guns]
Breathed 1st Stuart Horse Artillery [4 guns]
Green Louisiana Guard Artillery [2 guns]
Jackson Charlottesville Horse Artillery [4 guns]
🟦 US cavalry units (mounted)
1. Hess's Squadron, 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry
2. Walsh's Squadron, 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry
3. Miller's Squadron, 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry
4. Hart's Squadron, 1st New Jersey Cavalry
5. 1st Maryland Cavalry
6. McIntosh's Headquarters Guard
7. 7th Michigan Cavalry
8. 1st Michigan Cavalry
9. 6th Michigan Cavalry (2 Squadrons)
10. 6th Michigan Cavalry (2 Squadrons)
11. Treichel's Squadron, 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry
12. Rogers's Squadron, 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry
🟦 US cavalry units (dismounted skirmishers)
13. 5th Michigan
14. Janeway's Squadron, 1st New Jersey Cavalry
15. Boyd's Squadron, 1st New Jersey Cavalry
16. Treichel's Squadron, 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry
17. Rogers's Squadron 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry
18. Purnell Legion Cavalry
19. 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry
🟦 US horse artillery units
Clark's Section Battery M, 2nd U.S. Light Artillery [2 guns]
Pennington's Battery Battery M, 2nd U.S. Light Artillery [4 guns]
Kinney's Section, Randol's Battery Batteries E & G, 1st U.S. Light Artillery [2 guns]
Chester's Section, Randol's Battery Batteries E & G, 1st U.S. Light Artillery [2 guns]
Cress Woods
Jackson
Beckham
Green
Breathed
McGregor
Cress Ridge
Hampton
Lee
Stuart
HOFFMAN ROAD
Trostle
RUMMEL LANE
Rummel
STALLSMITH LANE
Witcher
Chambliss
Little's Run
Cress Run
Lott Woods
Lott
Chester
A. Howard
Kinney
McIntosh
SALEM CHURCH ROAD (LOW DUTCH ROAD)
White Run
Cress
Little
HANOVER ROAD
Clark
Reever
Pennington
Spangler
G. Howard
J. I Gregg
Custer
D. M. Gregg
N
0 300 yds
0 300m

East Cavalry Field

The Michigan cavalrymen rode in a loop, hacking furiously with their sabers. But Stuart replied with a mounted counterattack of his own. He ordered three of his regiments—the 1st, 9th, and 13th Virginia Cavalry—to charge in from the northwest, passing through the area once occupied by Witcher's men. The Virginians chased out the 7th Michigan, which retired through the opening from where it had come.

Brig. Gen. George Armstrong Custer commanded a brigade in the 3rd Division, Cavalry Corps. Although he had instructions to head to the other flank, when Gregg requested that his brigade stay nearby, Custer dutifully complied. During the engagement at East Cavalry Field, he led two mounted attacks against Stuart's cavalry. Possessing boundless nerve and derring-do, Custer ended the war as one of the Union's most respected cavalry commanders. Although he participated in many thrilling victories, Custer favored the memory of East Cavalry Field. He declared in his action report, "I challenge the annals of warfare to produce a more brilliant or successful charge of cavalry than the one just recounted." (Library of Congress)

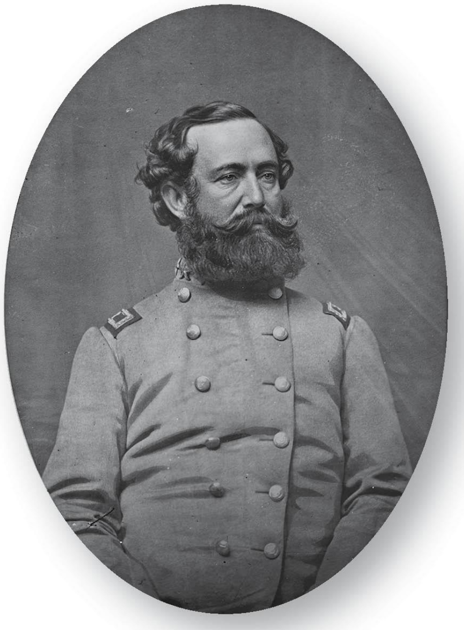
Not long after, Stuart played the rest of his hand. He ordered the 1st North Carolina Cavalry and the Jeff Davis Legion to mount up and charge. These regiments came in from Stuart's left—almost due north of the Union position—galloping onto the open fields behind the Union skirmish line. Then, one by one, each of Stuart's remaining mounted regiments followed—eight altogether—until the Confederate attack resembled a long column of squadrons. A Union officer stationed at the Lott farm later recalled, “In close columns of squadrons, advancing as if in review, with sabres drawn and glistening like silver in the bright sunlight, the spectacle called forth a murmur of admiration. It was, indeed, a memorable one.”

Sensing a possible disaster, the dismounted Union troopers fell back to their horses, mounted up, and made haste for the Hanover Road. Meanwhile, Custer—who had survived his thrilling ride with the 7th Michigan—rode up to another of his mounted regiments, the 1st Michigan Cavalry, planning to send it into the fray. As it turned out, Gregg was already there, giving the same instructions to the 1st Michigan’s commander, Col. Charles Town. Custer took position in front, drew his saber for a second time, and yelled, “Come on, you Wolverines!”

As Custer took these men into a thunderous charge, Stuart’s column lost its momentum. From their positions near the Abraham Reever farm along the Hanover Road—and from the Lott farm just to the north of it—Gregg’s horse artillery hammered the Confederate column with accurate fire, dismounting many of Stuart’s men. Then, just as the front of the rebel column ground to a halt, the 1st Michigan crashed into it, sabers swinging. Finally, one squadron from the 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry came charging out of woods east of the Lott farm. Capt. William Miller commanded this unit. Before the fight, he had received orders to stay put and protect the Low Dutch Road. Then, from the Lott woods, he watched as Stuart’s column passed parallel to his front. Because the Pennsylvanians were hidden in the thicket, none of the gray-clad horsemen detected Miller’s squadron. Believing it necessary to violate his orders, Miller told his bugler to sound a charge, and with sabers raised high above their heads, his detachment slammed into the rear of Stuart’s column.

Thus caught by countercharging columns in front and rear, Stuart’s cavalry broke formation and tried to cut their way out. One of Miller’s men, Lieut. William Brooke Rawle, remembered, “For minutes, which seemed like hours, amid the clashing of the sabres, the rattle of the small-arms, the frenzied imprecations, the demands to surrender, the undaunted replies, and the appeals for mercy, the Confederate column stood its ground.” As time went on, small parties of dismounted Union cavalry rallied, regained their horses, and began charging against Stuart’s column from all sides. The *coup de grâce* occurred when Gregg sent in a fresh squadron from the 1st New Jersey. This tipped the scales. Stuart’s men galloped to the rear, quitting the field without orders. So reported Col. Town, “The enemy were not only defeated, but they were driven from the field in great confusion.” The fight had lasted as long as three hours, with the Confederates losing 285 officers and men, including Brig. Gen. Wade Hampton, who was wounded by a saber blow to the head. Gregg’s losses were slightly larger, about 300.

This image—taken at Brandy Station in April 1864—depicts the men of Company C, 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry. The two officers in front are 1st Lieut. Miles G. Carter (left) and 2nd Lieut. William Brooke Rawle (right). During the fight at East Cavalry Field, the 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry suffered a loss of three killed, two mortally wounded, eight wounded, and three taken prisoner. (Library of Congress)



Prior to the Civil War, Brig. Gen. Wade Hampton III had served as part of the South Carolina General Assembly and as a state senator. A master of several low country plantations—and perhaps one of the wealthiest slave-owners in the Confederacy—Hampton devoted his personal fortune to the Confederate cause, helping to raise a unit called the Hampton

Legion. At Gettysburg, he served as a brigade commander in Stuart's cavalry division. During the swirling melee on the Rummel and Lott farm properties, Hampton received two saber blows to the head and a piece of shrapnel in his hip. Hampton survived the war, and despite his devotion to the Confederacy, he managed to regain U.S. citizenship and serve as governor of South Carolina and later as a U.S. Senator. (Library of Congress)

In the aftermath of the engagement, which has since become known as the "Battle of East Cavalry Field," both Stuart and Gregg declared victory. Stuart believed he won favorable results by securing the Confederate left. He wrote that, had the "enemy's main body been dislodged, as was confidently hoped and expected, I was in precisely the right position to discover it and improve the opportunity."

But Stuart was dead wrong. At no point did he gain the "right position." To do that, he needed to hold the intersection of the Hanover and Low Dutch Roads. Gregg's cavalry division occupied that crucial point at the beginning of the clash and it remained there at the end of it. No matter which way Stuart explained it, the Union cavalry held the field.

Stuart had been soundly beaten.

THE CANNONADE

After receiving orders from Lee, Longstreet went to work, assembling the requisite troops for the infantry assault against the Union center. Lee instructed him to include Pickett's division. Sometime mid-morning, that division took up a position just east of Seminary Ridge on the grounds of the Henry Spangler farm. Brig. Gen. Richard Garnett's brigade formed on the north side of the Spangler lane and Brig. James Kemper's brigade extended that line to the fields south of the lane. Brig. Gen. Lewis Armistead's brigade formed directly behind Garnett's brigade at the east edge of the Spangler Woods.

By nearly all accounts, Pickett's men were in fine spirits, even eager for a chance to attack. "The *esprit de corps* could not have been better," remembered Lieut. Col. Rawley Martin of the 53rd Virginia, "the men were in good physical condition, self reliant, and determined. They felt the gravity of the situation, for they knew well the metal [*sic*] of the foe in their front; they were serious and resolute, but not disheartened." Altogether, Pickett's division counted 5,848 officers and men.

The other two divisions chosen for the assault belonged to Lieut. Gen. A. P. Hill’s corps. Formed in two lines, Brig. Gen. James J. Pettigrew’s division took position on the west slope of Seminary Ridge, behind the crest, and about fifty yards north of Pickett’s left flank. Col. Birkett Fry’s brigade held the right. Col. James K. Marshall’s brigade connected to its left, followed by Brig. Gen. Joseph R. Davis’s brigade, and then by Col. John M. Brockenbrough’s brigade. Maj. Gen. Isaac Trimble’s division took position behind Pettigrew’s troops, with Col. W. L. J. Lowrance’s brigade on the right and Brig. Gen. James H. Lane’s on the left. The numbers in Pettigrew’s and Trimble’s divisions are difficult to determine since each division had engaged on July 1, but modern scholarship speculates that, between them, they fielded approximately 6,700 officers and men.

Capt. Walter S. Newhall served on the staff of Union brigade commander Col. John B. McIntosh. During the final mounted charge of Stuart's cavalry, Newhall carried a message to Capt. Charles Treichel's squadron, ordering it to mount up and retire. Finding most of Treichel's men still on foot and Stuart's cavalrymen approaching rapidly, Newhall led sixteen mounted men in a diversionary attack against the enemy column to purchase time for Treichel's men to escape. During the melee that followed, Newhall was struck in the chin by the spearhead of an enemy guidon, knocked unconscious, and left for dead. After three months, Newhall's cheek and jaw had healed and he returned to duty. On December 18, 1863, while fording a river, his horse inexplicably bucked midstream, crushing him, and causing him to drown. (Penn State University Libraries)

As Longstreet deployed these divisions, Hill prepared one additional division to act in support. He called upon Maj. Gen. Richard Anderson's division to "take advantage of any success which might be gained by the assaulting column, or to support it, if necessary." Anderson's division contained about 5,300 men, but three of his brigades had been heavily engaged on the previous day. Anderson's men were spread out across Seminary Ridge, with most of the infantry west of, or behind, Pickett's division. Two brigades—under Brig. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox and Col. David Lang—held a position near the Emmitsburg Road, about a quarter-mile in front of Pickett's men. Both reported to Pickett.

Finally, Longstreet coordinated with the Army of Northern Virginia's artillery. He gathered seventy-six guns from his own corps and eighty-eight from Ewell's and Hill's corps. These 164 cannon were spread all over the field, but most were situated near the center of the Confederate line, between the Peach Orchard and the Lutheran Seminary, a line about three miles long. Although Lee possessed a chief of artillery, Longstreet directed one of his battalion commanders, Lieut. Col. E. P. Alexander, to take charge of the cannonade. He gave Alexander orders to pummel the center of the Union line. As Alexander recollected, "It was not meant simply to make noise, but to try & cripple" the enemy, to "tear him limbless, as it were." Someone on Longstreet's staff pointed to a small copse of trees at the west edge of Peter Frey's property on Cemetery Ridge. That officer called the tree cluster, "our proposed point of attack." Alexander had orders to concentrate the artillery's fire on that area, for that would be where Longstreet expected the infantry to breach the Union line.

For about an hour, Longstreet and Alexander debated the purpose of the cannonade, but never face to face. Longstreet sent messages via courier, telling Alexander that if the artillery fire did not drive Union forces from Cemetery Ridge, then it fell to Alexander to call off the attack. Not wanting to be shouldered with that burden, Alexander replied that he could not judge the effectiveness of the bombardment, except by observing the slackening of the Union counterbattery fire.

Hoping to find a way of postponing the attack without openly defying Lee's orders, Longstreet told Alexander to be observant and to take note of when, or if, the artillery barrage had such an effect "as to warrant us in making the attack." Longstreet, of course, hoped that Alexander would never witness such a moment. Privately, he wished the cannonade would never reach a crescendo, and thus, July 3 would come and go with no attack being made. In 1878, Longstreet admitted, “I still desired to save my men and felt that if the artillery did not produce the desired effect, I would be justified in holding Pickett off.” Of course, Alexander did not understand Longstreet’s ulterior motive. Instead, he dutifully replied, “General: When our fire is at its best, I will advise Gen. Pickett to advance.”

At 1.07 p.m., upon Longstreet’s order, the cannonade commenced. Stationed just north of the Peach Orchard, Maj. Benjamin Eshleman ordered two guns from his battalion to fire in quick succession, which signaled to all the other Confederate guns within earshot to join in the bombardment. Soon, all 164 guns were firing, sending their solid shot, spherical case, and shell hurtling toward Cemetery Ridge. Nearly every participant, Union or Confederate, recollected how they had never heard such a cacophony. “What a roar—how incessant!” wrote Adjt. James F. Crocker of the 9th Virginia. “The earth trembled under the mighty resound of cannon. The air is darkened with sulphurous clouds. The whole valley is enveloped. The sun, lately so glaring, is itself obscured. Nothing can be seen but the flashing light leaping from the cannons’ mouth amidst the surrounding smoke.”

Maj. Gen. George Edward Pickett commanded a division of infantry attached to Longstreet's corps. Pickett's opinions about the Battle of Gettysburg are largely unknown, partly because he never submitted an after-action report (or, rather, Lee refused to accept the report that Pickett submitted) and partly because his wife published an unreliable, fictionalized rendition of Pickett's wartime letters. However, most primary accounts suggest that Pickett was in a good mood prior to the great attack. Col. Birkett Fry recalled, "He appeared to be in fine spirits, and, after a cordial greeting … expressed great confidence in the ability of our troops to drive the enemy." (Library of Congress)

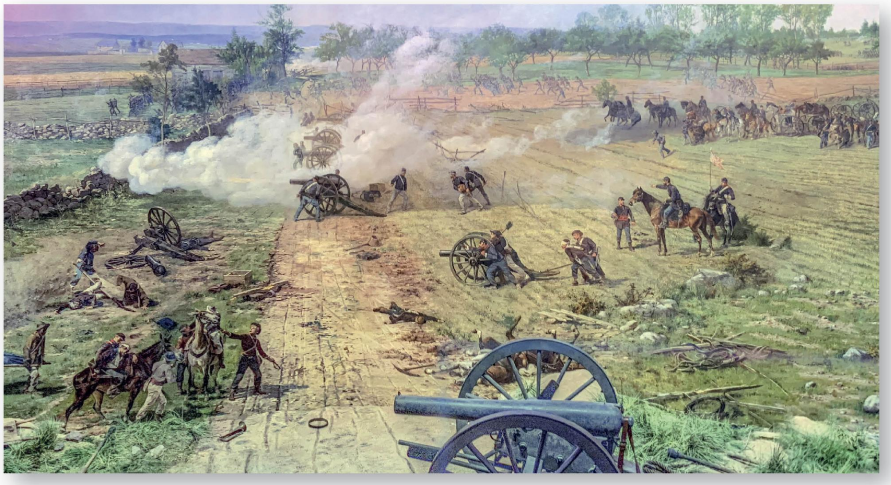
Along the ridge, Union soldiers leaped for cover, although there was not much to be had. A low stone wall ran along the crest of the ridge, separating the Peter Frey and Nicholas Codori properties. At a pinch, it served as shelter. Some Union soldiers had improved their shelter by piling knapsacks, fence rails, or anything else that might stop a bullet or shell fragment on top of the wall. Many other 2nd Corps soldiers simply formed ranks and went prone, praying that the incoming rounds would not land upon them. Among them, Corp. John Day Smith of the 19th Maine huddled in fear. Years later, he recollected:

> The very earth seemed to tremble as if in the convulsions of a mighty earthquake. The earth was thrown up in clouds and the air filled with screeching missiles of death. Upon every side horses were falling and caissons exploding. Animals fled in terror. Horses accustomed to the noises of

> battle neighed in fright. Shells exploding in the air sent their jagged fragments in all directions … The crash and roar were unearthly. It is impossible to describe the horror and suffering and havoc of this hour.

Farther north, the Union soldiers who occupied Ziegler's Grove had less protection, only a few scant boulders and scattered trees. After the battle, Corp. Chauncey Harris of the 108th New York wrote to his father that the bombardment was:

> [T]he hardest fire the 108th ever experienced—perfectly awful, murderous. Not a second but a shell shot, or ball flew over, or by us. Large limbs were torn from the trunks of the oak trees under which we lay, and precipitated down upon our heads … Small trees were cut down, and large ones shattered almost to pieces. Five different cannon balls struck a large oak, three feet in diameter, which stood not five feet from where I lay, and one of them passed entirely through it.



In 1883, French painter Paul Philippoteaux completed a 279-foot-long cyclorama depicting Pickett's Charge. (This image depicts a section of Philippoteaux's second, 377-foot cyclorama.) A Union battery (presumably Battery K, 1st New York Light Artillery, incorrectly armed with Parrott Rifles instead of three-inch rifles) fires from a position south of the Abraham Brian farm. Although this battery did not get into position until after the cannonade had ceased, it accurately depicts a Union battery at work. (Gettysburg National Military Park /National Park Service)

The bombardment had a telling effect, taking out Union soldiers as they tried to hunker down. A piece of shell struck one unlucky brigade commander, Col. Thomas Smyth, right on his nose. As he left the field to seek medical treatment, his staff went to inform Lieut. Col. Francis Pierce that he now commanded the brigade. One of those staff officers, Lieut. Theron E. Parsons, rushed to his horse, just in time to see a solid shot bore right through it. On foot, Parsons reached Pierce and told him to assume command. As he scanned the faces of Pierce's regiment—the 108th New York—Parsons beheld the shattered corpse of a close friend, Lieut. Dayton Card. Parsons wrote home, "His body presented a ghastly sight. He was struck in the middle of the breast by a missile, which exploded and tore him instantly in two. Half of his face was also torn away by a fragment of a shell."

During the first two days, the 2nd Corps commander (and for much of the battle, acting Left Wing commander as well), Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock, performed admirably, suturing rifts in the Union line and rallying routed units. However, on July 3, Hancock ran into controversy. During the cannonade, he ordered the Union batteries on Cemetery Ridge to maintain their long-range fire indefinitely. Several battery commanders from the Artillery Reserve chose to ignore Hancock's orders, but nearly all the 2nd Corps batteries obeyed him, expending their long-range ammunition before Pickett's Charge began. Later on, during the infantry assault, Hancock received a dangerous wound to his right thigh caused by a bullet ricochet. Although Hancock eventually recovered and returned to field command, his wound did not heal properly and it continued to cause him health problems for the remainder of the war. (Library of Congress)

After about fifteen minutes, the Union corps commander, Maj. Gen. Hancock, became concerned that the bombardment was rattling his men.

Mounting his horse, he began riding down the Union line, ordering every Union battery to man stations and return fire. Along the way, Hancock met the 2nd Corps artillery chief, Capt. John Hazard, and asked him why his guns were not replying. Hazard told him that the army's chief of artillery, Brig. Gen. Henry Hunt, had given him orders to reserve ammunition for a possible infantry assault. Under Hunt's instructions, Hazard's gunners had to fire sparingly. Using his authority as commander of the 2nd Corps, Hancock overruled Hunt, telling Hazard that his men must fire comprehensively. With that, Hazard's twenty-eight guns went to work.

Farther down the line, Hancock encountered Lieut. Col. Freeman McGilvery, who also commanded a brigade of artillery. Hancock ordered McGilvery's to fire, to which McGilvery declared his objection. Hancock replied, "My troops cannot stand this cannonade and will not stand if it is not replied to." McGilvery placated Hancock by ordering his batteries to fire a few paltry shots in his presence, but as soon as Hancock rode out of sight, McGilvery ordered his gunners to cease fire. He considered it wiser to conserve ammunition for the infantry assault that Hunt had predicted.

Thus, the Union artillery began an erratic response. Altogether, the Army of the Potomac had ninety-two guns posted along Cemetery Ridge. The thirty guns at the north end of the ridge—those behind the 2nd Corps line—opened up with a relentless, indiscriminate fire. Additionally, the batteries atop Cemetery Hill joined in. Maj. Thomas W. Osborn commanded these sixty-eight guns. When the bombardment commenced, he ordered them to pivot westward and return fire. Meanwhile, the remaining batteries at the south end of the Cemetery Ridge fired slowly or not at all.

Generally, the Union counter-fire hit its mark. The Union gunners aimed for muzzle-flashes as they saw them through the clouds of smoke. At first, Union shells and solid shot landed atop Seminary Ridge, claiming the lives of a few Confederate gunners. But soon, the Union gunners began overshooting their targets and the stray rounds landed among the Confederate infantry who were still waiting for orders to move forward. All that Longstreet's infantry could do was lie prone and outlast the cannonade. So recollected a lieutenant in Pickett's division, "It seemed that death was in every foot of space, and safety was only in flight; but none of the men did that. To know the tension of mind under fire like that, it must be experienced; it can not be told in words."

Brig. Gen. Henry Jackson Hunt served as the Union chief of artillery. Partway into the cannonade, he silenced several batteries to preserve sufficient ammunition to repel an infantry assault. (Library of Congress)

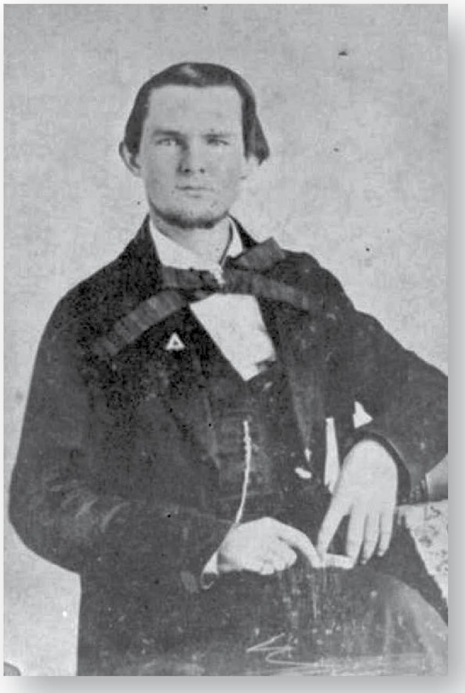
It is impossible to say how many Confederates were hit by artillery fire prior to the commencement of the infantry assault, but circumstantial evidence suggests that the number may have been large. An officer in the 19th Virginia reported that twenty men were hit out of 426 in his regiment. Likewise, a surgeon attached to the 11th Mississippi recollected that the Union artillery had barely begun to fire before wounded men began hobbling to the rear. He wrote that, “many were killed or wounded before the charge began.” Perhaps exaggerating, an officer in Pickett’s division believed that 1,100 men from his division alone had fallen during the cannonade.

Whatever the actual number, the results were horrifying. A soldier in Kemper’s brigade, Sgt. Maj. David Johnston of the 7th Virginia, recalled the terrible hour under the Union guns. He wrote, “Turn your eyes whithersoever you would, and there was to be seen at almost every moment of time, guns, swords, haversacks, human flesh and bone, flying and dangling in the air, or bouncing above the earth, which now trembled beneath us as if shaken by an earthquake.”

For the Union infantry, enduring the cannonade was just as taxing, perhaps even more so, once the Union artillery returned fire. Many of the Union guns had to fire over the heads of the prone infantry, who were lying flat, forcing them to breathe the malodorous fumes. Along with some 170 comrades, Sgt. Maj. William B. Hincks of 14th Connecticut was lying, face down, with his arm thrown over the back of a fellow soldier. His sweat pooled underneath him until the ground turned into mud. In later years, Hincks recalled that smoke of the Union artillery was so thick that the sun seemed blotted out. He wrote, “One of the guns was directly behind me and at every discharge, the concussion would throw gravel over me and I could not only see and smell the thick cloud of burning powder, but could taste it also.”

About 300 Union infantry suffered wounds or death from the Confederate cannonade. A few Union infantry even fell to friendly fire. One unlucky round fired from Capt. James Rorty’s battery prematurely exploded as it exited the barrel. Fragments sliced their way through the back of a popular lieutenant who belonged to the 20th Massachusetts as he was lying on the ground reading a book by Charles Dickens. Meanwhile, another badly aimed round fired by Battery A, 4th U.S. Artillery, sheared off the heads of two privates in the 69th Pennsylvania.

From his position along Seminary Ridge, Lieut. Col. Alexander observed the Union fire through his field glasses and he did not like what he saw. After twenty minutes, the Union artillery fire had only increased, which was not what he had hoped. Alexander planned to send a message to Pickett instructing him to proceed at the first sign of slackening enemy cannon fire. He predicted that such a moment would appear no later than thirty minutes after the start of the cannonade. But so far, things did not look favorable. Alexander signaled to his gunners to keep firing, and the barrage continued.



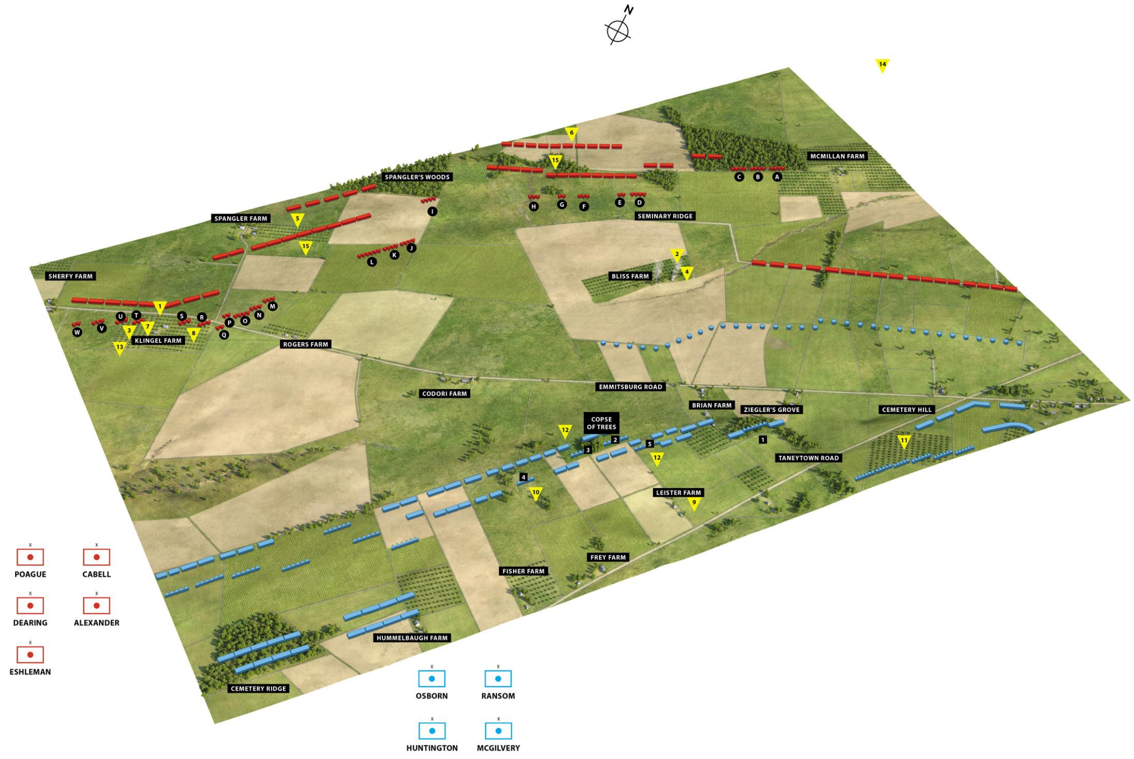
Twenty-three-year-old Sgt. Jeremiah S. Gage of the 11th Mississippi was among many Confederate soldiers mortally wounded by the cannonade. Struck in the shoulder and pelvis by large shrapnel, Gage hastily scribbled a note to his mother, before dying: “My dear Mother, This is the last you may ever hear from me. I have time to tell you that I died like a man. Bear my loss as best you can… This letter is stained with my blood.” (Gage Family Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Mississippi Libraries)

Then, at about 1.40 p.m., the Union artillery noticeably decreased. This occurred when Brig. Gen. Hunt ordered his gunners to conserve their ammunition. When the barrage began, he had been on Little Round Top, inspecting a battery. He made haste to Cemetery Hill, hoping to find Meade and confer with him. Instead, he encountered Howard and his chief of artillery, Maj. Osborn. During this impromptu conference, Osborn suggested that if the Union artillery ceased its fire all at once, “as though the artillery on Cemetery Hill were driven off the field,” this would trick Lee into revealing his plans. Hunt and Howard agreed. Under Howard’s direction, Osborn jogged off and began silencing his guns. Meanwhile, Hunt rode south, ordering the guns along Cemetery Ridge to cease. Just moments before he arrived, most 2nd Corps artillery quit firing for a more practical reason: it had run short of long-range shot.

THE CANNONADE

In the early afternoon, Gen. Robert E. Lee ordered Lieut. Gen. James Longstreet to supervise an infantry assault against the Union position along Cemetery Ridge. Longstreet commanded Maj. Gen. George Pickett's division (from his own corps) and two divisions from Lieut. Gen. A. P. Hill's corps (Brig. Gen. Johnston Pettigrew's and Maj. Gen. Isaac Trimble's). Additionally, Pickett assumed temporary command of two brigades from Maj. Gen. Richard Anderson's division (Brig. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox's and Col. David Lang's). Altogether, the attacking units totaled 14,100 infantry. Prior to the attack, Lee ordered his army's artillery, over 160 cannon, to shell the Union position. One of Longstreet's battalion commanders, Lieut. Col. E. P. Alexander, received authority to determine the cannonade's start time, which turned out to be 1.07 p.m. After 108 minutes of shelling—which included Union counter-fire—the cannonade ceased so that Longstreet's infantry could advance.

Note: the base map covers an area of approximately 1,881 yards by 2,614 yards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KLINGEL FARM
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ROGERS FARM
EMMITSBURG ROAD
CODORI FARM
BRIAN FARM
ZIEGLER'S GROVE
CEMETERY HILL
COPSE OF TREES
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TANEYTOWN ROAD
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LEISTER FARM
9
FREY FARM
FISHER FARM
HUMMELBAUGH FARM
CEMETERY RIDGE
POAGUE
CABELL
DEARING
ALEXANDER
ESHLEMAN
OSBORN
RANSOM
HUNTINGTON
MCGILVERY

CONFEDERATE

Confederate artillery

A. Crenshaw's Richmond Battery (Johnston) [4 guns]
B. Fredericksburg Artillery (Mayre) [4 guns]
C. Company A, Sumter Artillery (Ross) [4 guns]
D. Company C, Sumter Artillery (Wingfield) [4 guns]

E. Battery C, 1st North Carolina Light Artillery (Graham) [2 guns]
F. Everett Artillery (Wyatt) [3 guns]
G. Warrenton Artillery (Brooke) [2 guns]
H. Madison (Mississippi) Light Artillery (Ward) [3 guns]
I. Ashland Artillery (Woolfolk) [4 guns]
J. Lynchburg Artillery (Blount) [4 guns]
K. Hampden Artillery (Caskie) [4 guns]
L. Fauquier Artillery (Stribling) [6 guns]
M. 2nd Company, Washington Artillery (Richardson) [3 guns]
N. 4th Company, Washington Artillery (Norcom) [3 guns]
O. Pulaski Artillery (Fraser) [4 guns]
P. Battery A, 1st North Carolina Light Artillery (Manly) [2 guns]
Q. Section, 4th Company, Washington Artillery (Battles) [2 guns]
R. 3rd Company, Washington Artillery (Miller) [3 guns]
S. Bath Artillery (Taylor) [3 guns]
T. Brooks Artillery (Gilbert) [3 guns]
U. Madison (Louisiana) Light Artillery (Moody) [3 guns]
V. Bedford Artillery (Jordan) [3 guns]
W. 1st Richmond Howitzers (McCarthy) [2 guns]

UNION

Union artillery

1. Battery I, 1st U.S. Light Artillery (Woodruff) [6 guns]
2. Battery A, 4th U.S. Light Artillery (Cushing) [6 guns]
3. Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery (Brown) [4 guns]
4. Battery B, 1st New York Light Artillery (Rorty) [4 guns]
5. Battery A, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery (Arnold) [6 guns]

▼EVENTS

(Times are approximate.)

1. 4.30 a.m. The brigades commanded by Brig. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox and Col. David Lang arrive at Daniel Klingel’s farm, taking up an advance position in preparation for a possible attack.

2. 6.30–7.30 a.m. Confederate sharpshooters occupy the William Bliss farm, touching off a firefight. Two successive attacks by the 12th New Jersey drive out these sharpshooters, but after each attack, the sharpshooters reoccupy the farm structures.

3. 9.00 a.m. Lieut. Col. E. P. Alexander orders his batteries to get into position for a pre-assault cannonade.

4. 10.30 a.m. After witnessing several hours of skirmish action at the Bliss farm, Brig. Gen. Alexander Hays orders the 14th Connecticut to drive the Confederate sharpshooters from the house and barn, torching the structures before they leave.

5. 9.30–10.00 a.m. Running behind schedule, Maj. Gen. George Pickett’s division arrives at its staging area on the Henry Spangler farm. Pickett assumes temporary command of Wilcox’s and Lang’s brigades.

6. 10.00–11.00 a.m. Brig. Gen. James Lane reaches the staging area on Seminary Ridge behind Brig. Gen. J. Johnston Pettigrew's division. Shortly after arriving, Maj. Gen. Isaac Trimble assumes command of Lane's division.

7. 11.00 a.m. Lieut. Col. Alexander reports to Longstreet that the 1st Corps artillery has taken up its position and is ready to participate in the bombardment.

8. 1.07 p.m. Near the Peach Orchard, two signal guns belonging to Maj. Benjamin Eshleman's battalion fire in quick succession, signaling the beginning of the bombardment.

9. 1.15 p.m. Maj. Gen. Meade and staff leave the Lydia Leister farm, moving army headquarters to the Peter Frey farm and then to Powers Hill.

10. 1.25 p.m. The commander of the 2nd Corps, Maj. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock, orders the 2nd Corps artillery brigade to return fire.

11. 1.40 p.m. On Cemetery Hill, the Union chief of artillery, Brig. Gen. Henry J. Hunt, orders the 11th Corps artillery brigade to cease fire to draw out the Confederate infantry assault.

12. 2.30 p.m. The 2nd Corps artillery brigade runs out of long-range shot. Two batteries—Capt. William Arnold's and 1st Lieut. Fred Brown's—withdraw from Cemetery Ridge.

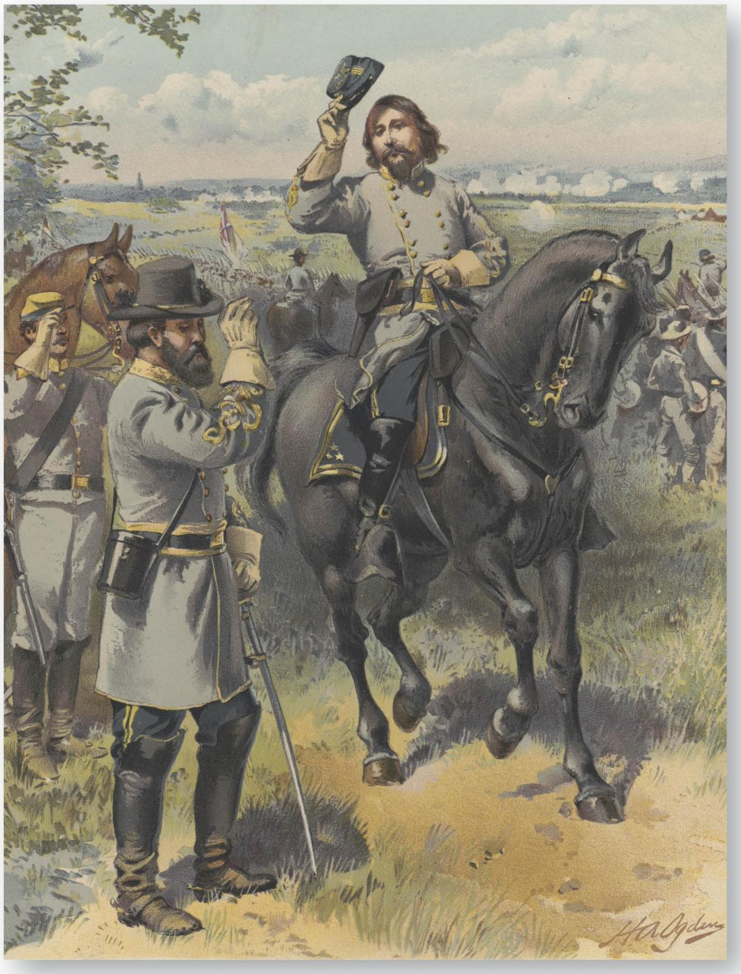
13. 2.40 p.m. Noticing the retirement of the 2nd Corps artillery, Lieut. Col. Alexander sends a message to Pickett, advising him to begin the attack.

14. 2.55 p.m. The Confederate cannonade comes to an end.

15. 3.00 p.m. Pickett's, Pettigrew's, and Trimble's divisions commence their attack.

Lieut. Col. Alexander took notice of this change. Also, once the smoke cleared, he could see two Union batteries (Arnold's and Brown's) withdrawing. To him, it meant that the "enemy was feeling the punishment." Hastily, he scribbled a note to Pickett that read: "For God's sake come quick. The 18 guns [on Cemetery Ridge] have gone. Come quick or my ammunition will not let me support you properly." Alexander's courier found Pickett near the Spangler Woods. After Pickett read Alexander's note, he handed it to Longstreet (who was nearby) and asked, "General, shall I advance?" As Longstreet remembered it, he was so overcome with emotion that he could not even vocalize a response. He bowed an affirmative, and Pickett replied, "I shall lead my division forward, sir."

Vexed, Longstreet mounted his horse and dashed over to confer with Alexander. When they met, Alexander pointed out that his ammunition was running low, but with the Union guns falling silent, this was the best time to launch the infantry assault. Speaking sharply, Longstreet said, "Go stop Pickett where he is and replenish your ammunition!" Annoyed, Alexander replied that he could not do that. He pointed out that the reserve ammunition train had too little to offer and it would take more than an hour to distribute the ammunition chests to the needy batteries. During that time, the Union artillery might improve its condition and the window of opportunity would be lost. Longstreet replied, “I do not want to make this charge. I do not see how it can succeed. I would not make it now but that Gen. Lee has ordered it and is expecting it.”



In 1900, illustrator Henry A. Ogden depicted the scene when Maj. Gen. Pickett received permission from Lieut. Gen. Longstreet to begin the attack. According to Longstreet’s recollection, even as the artillery’s ammunition ran low, he still had doubts about the success of an infantry assault. Pickett asked, “General, shall I advance?” Longstreet recollected, “The effort to speak the order failed, and I could only indicate it by an affirmative bow. He accepted the duty with seeming confidence of success, leaped on his horse, and rode gayly to his command.” (Library of Congress)

For a short time, Longstreet and Alexander stood in silence. Alexander believed that Longstreet was looking for an excuse to halt Pickett, but Alexander professed he did not feel qualified to provide him with one. Years later, Alexander reflected, “I was too conscious of my own youth and inexperience to express any opinion not directly asked. So I remained silent while Longstreet fought his battle out alone.”

Clearly, conflict swirled inside Longstreet’s mind, but in the end, he decided to obey Lee’s orders. As he later wrote, at that moment, “I then saw that there was no help for it, and that Pickett must advance.” Longstreet’s silence was equivalent to a decision. Behind him, Pickett’s staff galloped from brigade to brigade, bringing the division to its feet.

Gettysburg’s largest attack was about to begin.

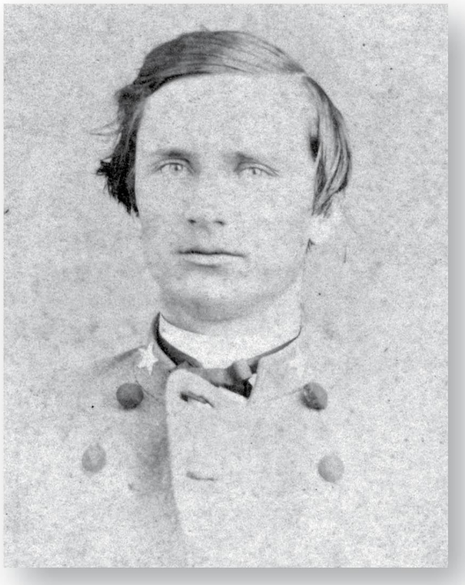
PICKETT’S CHARGE

“Attention, battalion!” ran along Seminary Ridge. The gray-clad infantry formed their lines, shook out their flags, and shouldered their rifles. Most—but not all—of the field and line officers traveled on foot; however, all the staff officers and a few brigade and regimental officers traveled on horseback. Sgt. Maj. Johnston, who had been wounded by a piece of shell, recalled seeing Pickett dashing along the rear of his brigade, atop his mount, cheering madly. Pickett shouted, “Up, men, and to your posts! Don’t forget today that you are from old Virginia!” Johnston recalled, “The effect of this word upon the men was electrical.” As the wounded soldiers clamored out of the way, the men who had survived the bombardment bid them a solemn farewell. Over in Armistead’s brigade, Armistead trooped the line on foot. Approaching the color bearer of the 53rd Virginia, he asked, “Sergeant, are you going to put those colors on the enemy works today?” Sgt. Leander Blackburn replied, “I will try, sir, and if mortal man can do it, it shall be done.”

Sometime around 3.00 p.m., the Confederate infantry began their advance. Seen from the Union position, the attack was breathtaking. One awestruck soldier in 1st Corps wrote that, “No one who saw them could help admiring the steadiness with which they came on, like the shadow of a cloud seen from a distance as it sweeps across a sunny field.” Lieut. Frank Haskell, a staff officer serving with Brig. Gen. Gibbon, wrote:

> Every eye could see his legions, an overwhelming resistless tide of an ocean of armed men sweeping upon us! Regiment after regiment and brigade after brigade move from the woods and rapidly take their places in the lines forming the assault… More than half a mile their front extends; more than a thousand yards the dull gray masses deploy, man touching man, rank pressing rank, and line supporting line. The red flags wave, their horsemen gallop up and down; the arms of eighteen thousand men, barrel and bayonet, gleam in the sun, a sloping forest of flashing steel. Right on they move, as with one soul, in perfect order, without impediment of ditch, or wall or stream, over ridge and slope, through orchard and meadow, and cornfield, magnificent, grim, irresistible.

As soon as the Confederate infantry became visible through the smoke, Union artillery opened fire. The batteries that still carried long-range ammunition—those posted atop Cemetery Hill or those at the southern end of Cemetery Ridge—struck first. Mainly, they lobbed solid shot, a ten- or twelve-pound ball (or bolt) made of solid iron. Or, they fired exploding shell, a hollow, cast-iron conoidal or spherical shell with a bursting charge. It was hard for the Union artillerymen to maintain an accurate long-range fire since the Confederate infantry passed over rolling ground. The depressions were so deep that, for brief periods, the lines could not be seen. But nevertheless, the solid shot and shell occasionally found their targets. “These plowed through or exploded in our ranks, making great havoc,” recalled Adjt. James Crocker of the 9th Virginia. “I remember I saw one shell explode amidst the ranks of the left company of the regiment on our right [the 14th Virginia]. Men fell like ten-pins in a ten-strike.” Whenever the artillery opened up holes in the lines, the file-closers patched them together, urging soldiers to stand shoulder to shoulder. Slowly but surely, the Confederate front began to shrink.



Capt. Waller Massie Boyd, Company G, 19th Virginia Infantry, graduated from the Virginia Military Institute in 1861. During Pickett's Charge, he made it to the stone wall on Cemetery Ridge. (Some accounts claim that he was the first from Garnett's brigade to cross the wall.) Boyd received a gunshot wound to the thigh and fell captive to Union forces. He was sent to Fort Delaware prison camp, and then to Johnson's Island, and finally to Point Lookout, where he was exchanged on March 3, 1864. After recovering from his wound, Boyd returned to service, received a promotion to major, and was captured with his command at the Battle of Sailor's Creek, April 6, 1865. (Library of Congress)

As they approached the Emmitsburg Road, the Confederate infantry from Pickett's division began to shift direction. Pickett's men marched at a slight oblique to the left, crossing the road near the Peter Rogers and Daniel Klingel farms. Meanwhile, Pettigrew's men continued to move straight ahead. Fry's brigade, which occupied the right of the division, followed a damaged fence that ran nearly east-west across the field. Gradually, the left flank of Pickett's division and the right flank of Pettigrew's divisions converged. They drifted toward the clump of trees that Alexander had used to mark his artillery.

Brig. Gen. Alexander Stewart Webb commanded the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, 2nd Corps, commonly known as the “Philadelphia Brigade.” A no-nonsense West Pointer who performed staff work early in the war, Webb received brigade command only ten days prior to the battle. At Gettysburg, Webb performed remarkably, remaining on foot with his infantry, even as a portion of his brigade abandoned the stone wall. Webb’s divisional commander, Brig. Gen. Gibbon, credited Webb with “great gallantry,” and he declared that had it not been for Webb’s leadership, “the enemy would have succeeded in gaining a foothold.” Twenty-eight years later, Webb received the Medal of Honor for his July 3 heroics. (NARA)

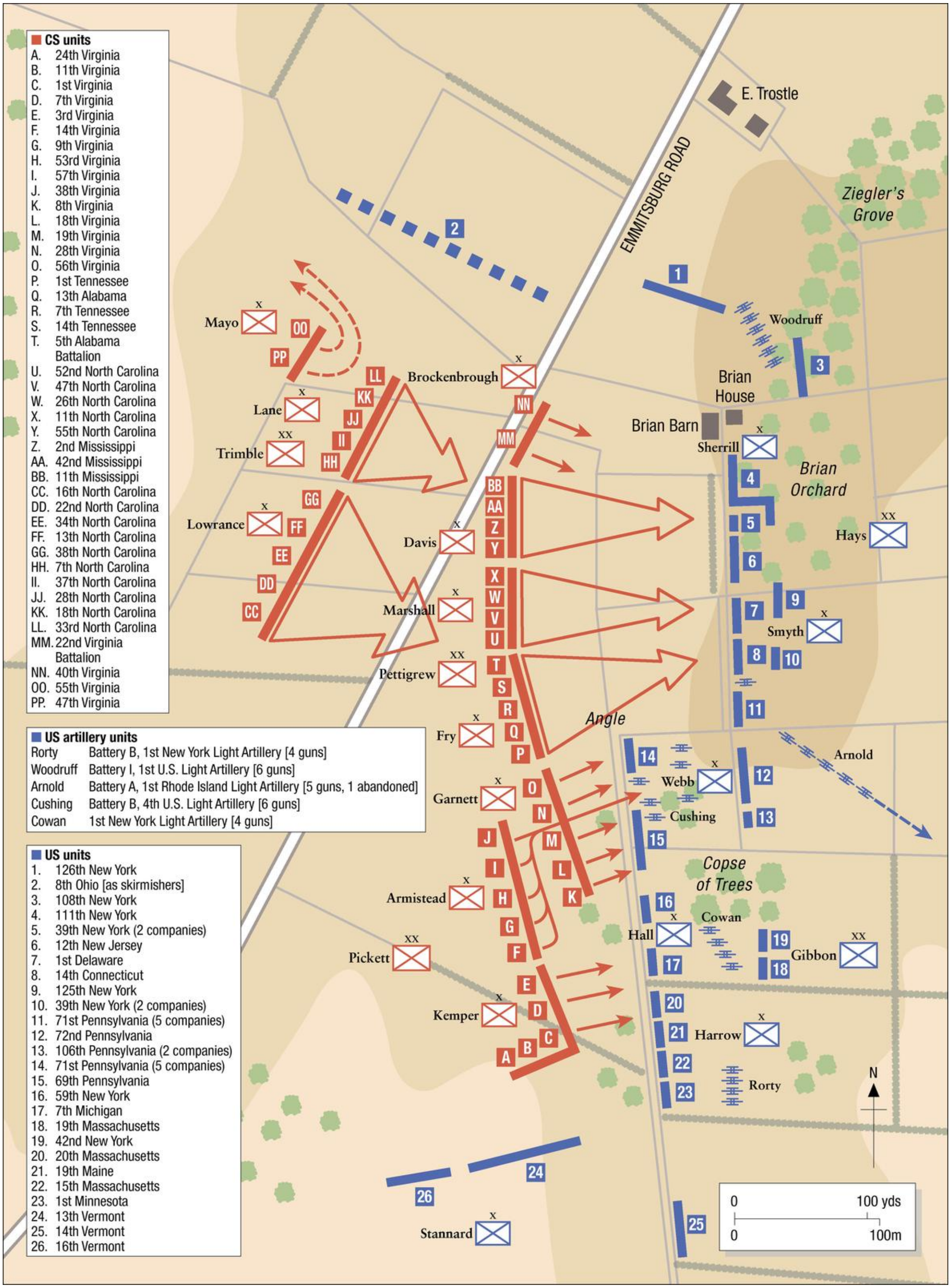
When the Confederate infantry reached the Emmitsburg Road, less than 400 yards from the Union infantry line, the soldiers in Pettigrew’s division slowed their pace to cross the fences that bordered both sides of the road. The previous day, Union troops had demolished whole sections of these fences, such that Pickett’s division did not encounter these obstacles. However, in front of Pettigrew’s division, the fences were mostly intact. Unable to bull-rush the fence, the men had to climb it. All the while, Union artillery rained down. Now, Union gunners fired spherical case and canister shot. Spherical case shells burst at head level, scattering a dozen musket balls in a 360-degree arc. Canister shells operated similarly, except that they disintegrated as soon as they came out of the muzzle. They scattered thirty large iron balls in a cone-shaped path, which tore great swaths out of an unprotected infantry line.

In the postwar years, Capt. John H. Moore of the 7th Tennessee recalled the difficulty of scaling the Emmitsburg Road fence. He wrote:

> The time it took to climb to the top of the fence seemed to me an age of suspense. It was not a leaping over; it was rather an insensible tumbling to the ground in the nervous hope of escaping the thickening missiles that buried themselves in falling victims, in the ground, and in the fence, against which they rattled with the distinctiveness of large rain-drops pattering on a roof.

Moore’s company—Company B, 7th Tennessee—took a direct hit from a canister round fired by a lone gun attached to Battery A, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery. The effect was appalling. Moore’s men—dead and wounded—were left piled in the road. Company B had taken forty-seven officers and men into the charge. By the end of the charge, only three came out unhurt.

After crossing the road, the remaining Confederate infantry made their attempt to take the crest of the ridge. The 2nd Corps infantry rose to their feet, leveled their rifles, and volleyed into the oncoming Confederates. Lieut. Col. Rawley Martin of the 53rd Virginia recalled that, “The men fell like stalks of grain before the reaper but still they closed the gaps and pressed forward through that pitiless storm.” Garnett’s Virginians surged toward the stone wall that protected Brig. Gen. Alexander Webb’s 1,200 Pennsylvanians. Webb had threatened to shoot any man who flinched, and one of his regimental commanders repeated the same warning. Garnett aimed for a place where the wall formed a sharp angle. This wall generally ran north–south, but at Webb’s front, it jogged east–west for about 200 feet. (After the battle, veterans and historians routinely called this area “the Angle.”)


CS units
A. 24th Virginia
B. 11th Virginia
C. 1st Virginia
D. 7th Virginia
E. 3rd Virginia
F. 14th Virginia
G. 9th Virginia
H. 53rd Virginia
I. 57th Virginia
J. 38th Virginia
K. 8th Virginia
L. 18th Virginia
M. 19th Virginia
N. 28th Virginia
O. 56th Virginia
P. 1st Tennessee
Q. 13th Alabama
R. 7th Tennessee
S. 14th Tennessee
T. 5th Alabama Battalion
U. 52nd North Carolina
V. 47th North Carolina
W. 26th North Carolina
X. 11th North Carolina
Y. 55th North Carolina
Z. 2nd Mississippi
AA. 42nd Mississippi
BB. 11th Mississippi
CC. 16th North Carolina
DD. 22nd North Carolina
EE. 34th North Carolina
FF. 13th North Carolina
GG. 38th North Carolina
HH. 7th North Carolina
II. 37th North Carolina
JJ. 28th North Carolina
KK. 18th North Carolina
LL. 33rd North Carolina
MM. 22nd Virginia Battalion
NN. 40th Virginia
OO. 55th Virginia
PP. 47th Virginia
US artillery units
Rorty Battery B, 1st New York Light Artillery [4 guns]
Woodruff Battery I, 1st U.S. Light Artillery [6 guns]
Arnold Battery A, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery [5 guns, 1 abandoned]
Cushing Battery B, 4th U.S. Light Artillery [6 guns]
Cowan 1st New York Light Artillery [4 guns]
US units
1. 126th New York
2. 8th Ohio [as skirmishers]
3. 108th New York
4. 111th New York
5. 39th New York (2 companies)
6. 12th New Jersey
7. 1st Delaware
8. 14th Connecticut
9. 125th New York
10. 39th New York (2 companies)
11. 71st Pennsylvania (5 companies)
12. 72nd Pennsylvania
13. 106th Pennsylvania (2 companies)
14. 71st Pennsylvania (5 companies)
15. 69th Pennsylvania
16. 59th New York
17. 7th Michigan
18. 19th Massachusetts
19. 42nd New York
20. 20th Massachusetts
21. 19th Maine
22. 15th Massachusetts
23. 1st Minnesota
24. 13th Vermont
25. 14th Vermont
26. 16th Vermont
E. Trostle
Emmitsburg Road
Ziegler's Grove
Woodruff
Brian House
Brian Barn
Sherrill
Brian Orchard
Hays
Smyth
Angle
Arnold
Webb
Cushing
Copse of Trees
Cowan
Hall
Gibbon
Harrow
Rorty
Stannard
Mayo
Lane
Trimble
Lowrance
Brockenbrough
Davis
Marshall
Pettigrew
Fry
Garnett
Armistead
Pickett
Kemper
N
0 100 yds
0 100m

The Angle

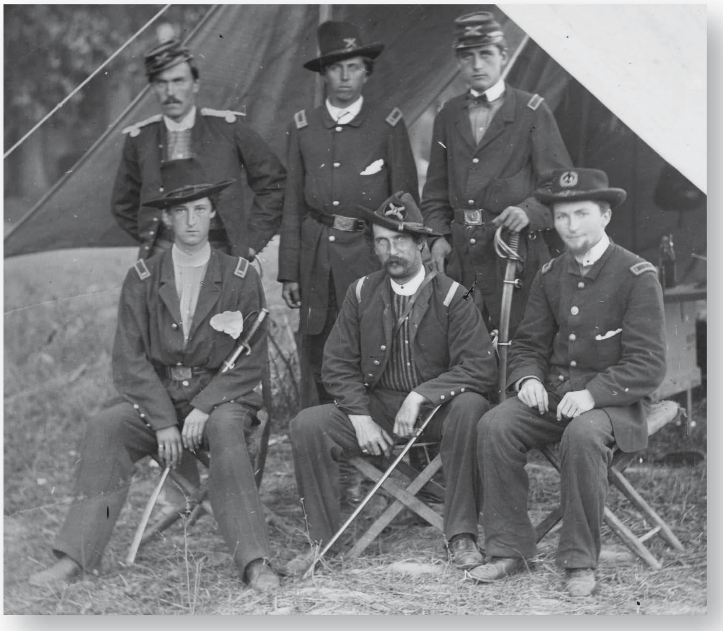
Five companies of the 71st Pennsylvania occupied the outer wall of the Angle with two guns from Battery A, 4th U.S. Artillery, on their left. (Also, prior to the charge, infantry from the 71st Pennsylvania had seized a third gun, pushed it to the wall, and operated it.) An Irish-American regiment, the 69th Pennsylvania, formed on the left of the guns. Pvt. Anthony McDermott of that regiment recalled, “our first round was fired with deliberation and simultaneously, and threw their front line into confusion.”

During the Union defense of Cemetery Ridge, the 69th Pennsylvania held the outer wall of the Angle. Recruited from the Irish neighborhoods of Philadelphia, this regiment carried a conspicuous emerald-green banner emblazoned with a wolfhound and sunburst. This image depicts the field and staff officers of the 69th Pennsylvania in June 1865. Seated at center is Lieut. Col. William Davis, who, at the rank of captain in 1863, took command after the regiment’s field officers had all been killed or wounded. Adjt. Anthony McDermott, who became the regiment’s historian, is seated at right. (At Gettysburg, McDermott was a private.) (Library of Congress)

The Virginians agreed. Sgt. Randolph Shotwell of the 8th Virginia recalled how the first volley was a “blinding, withering, wasting blaze, a long sheet of lightning, as if from the summit of the hill had suddenly sprung a vomiting volcano of deadly gases!” Stunned by the blow, most of Garnett’s men halted, took a knee, and fired back. Shotwell was one of those. As he reloaded, he looked around him, beholding the carnage. He remembered, “All around me were men weltering in their life-blood, some on their faces, some on their backs, some writhing and moaning, others still forever!”

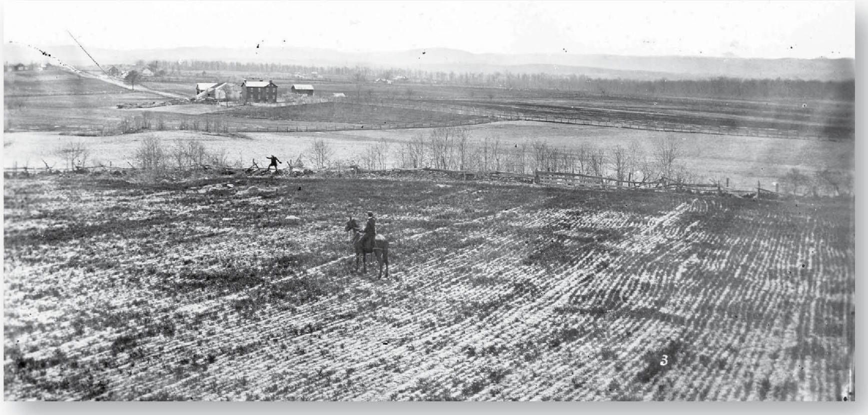
Lieut. Alonzo H. Cushing and a squad of men operated the two artillery pieces from Battery A. During the bombardment, Cushing had been hit twice, once in his shoulder and once in his testicles. With Garnett's men coming at him, he ordered his men to fire double canister—two charges in each tube. Turning to a sergeant, he shouted, "I will give them one more shot!" After pulling the lanyard, a Confederate ball entered his open mouth, killing him. More than 151 years later, on November 6, 2014, Cushing received a posthumous Medal of Honor in a special ceremony at the White House, the last Civil War soldier to receive such a distinction.

Cushing's last rounds had a telling effect. Garnett fell, struck through the waist by a piece of canister. His horse received a piece of shell through its right shoulder, bucked its rider, and then went galloping away, leaping over two stunned infantrymen in its mad dash for safety. After Garnett's body was flung from the saddle, it went missing. No one from Garnett's brigade was ever able to carry it off the field, and surprisingly, no Union soldier ever mentioned burying it. Garnett's corpse became lost in the pile of bodies, never to be seen again. Additionally, all five of Garnett's regimental commanders fell killed or wounded. By the time the havoc had ended, command of the brigade fell to Maj. Charles S. Peyton.



This photograph depicts six artillerymen in October 1862. 1st Lieut. Alonzo Hereford Cushing stands in the second row, middle. On July 3, Cushing commanded Battery A, 4th U.S. Light Artillery. During the bombardment that preceded the infantry attack, Cushing received two wounds, one to the shoulder and one to the groin. After casualties rendered four of his guns inoperative, he pushed two cannon up to the stone wall and continued to command them until he received his death wound—a shot through the mouth. Cushing received the Medal of Honor on November 6, 2014—151 years later. (Library of Congress)

Once Webb's brigade opened fire, the rest of Brig. Gen. Gibbon's division joined in. (Gibbon had resumed divisional command sometime that morning.) The Union soldiers took careful aim, mowing down whole sections of Garnett's and Kemper's brigades. "Nothing human could stand it," recollected Maj. Edmund Rice of the 19th Massachusetts. "All that portion of Pickett's division which came into the zone of this terrible close musketry fire appeared to melt and drift away in the powder-smoke of both sides."



This 1882 photograph depicts the stone wall defended by Brig. Gen. Alexander Webb's brigade. On July 3, the 69th Pennsylvania held the position immediately behind the wall in the left foreground (near where the man is standing). Lieut. Alonzo Cushing's two guns were positioned in the right foreground. Pickett's division swept toward the viewer after crossing the Codori farm fields, which are at middle distance. The Codori house and barn and the Emmitsburg Road are visible in the background. (Gettysburg National Military Park /National Park Service)

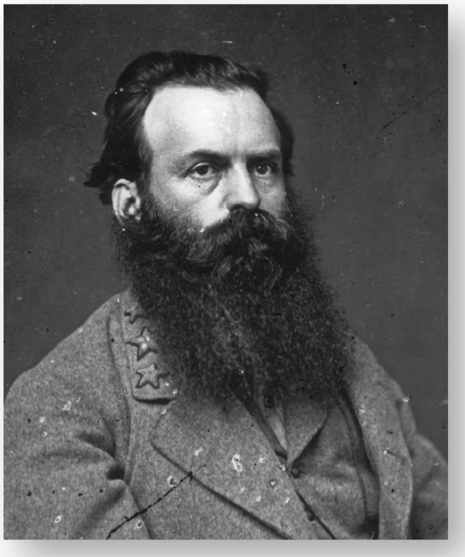
Kemper's men faced a particularly deadly situation, largely because they received destructive fire from two directions. As Kemper's men crossed the Emmitsburg Road, Gibbon's left-most brigade—Harrow's—opened fire on it from the front, as did a small 1st Corps brigade under Col. Theodore Gates. But then, as Kemper's men closed with Harrow's line, two 1st Corps regiments appeared on their right, almost at right angles with their line. These were the 13th and 16th Vermont—1,300 strong—under the command of Brig. Gen. George Stannard. During the advance, Stannard had watched Kemper's brigade drift to his right, out of the field of fire. When it became clear that, if his brigade stayed put, his men would have nothing at which to shoot, Stannard decided to wheel two of his regiments to the right, swinging them out into the Codori fields. The 13th Vermont acted as the hinge and the 16th Vermont joined on its left. Col. Wheelock Veazey of the 16th Vermont recalled how his regiment fired only "a few volleys," but these were sufficient to check Kemper's advance. Veazey recollected, "great masses of men seemed to disappear in a moment." One of Kemper's men confirmed that opinion. Years later, he wrote that, "Volley after volley of crashing musket balls" swept through Kemper's line, "mow[ing] us down like wheat before the scythe."

Kemper fell wounded, hit in the abdomen. Unable to ride, he slid off the back of his horse. Apparently, he fell close enough to the 2nd Corps line that Kemper believed he could recognize the man who shot him if he ever saw him again. After seeing Kemper fall, a cluster of Union soldiers bolted from the line to capture him. They attempted to put him on a blanket and carry him to the rear. But just then, a squad of Virginians came to his rescue, chasing off the federal troops. They picked up the edges of the blanket and carried Kemper in the other direction. Kemper survived his wound but he was captured by Union forces during the retreat to Virginia. Command of his brigade fell to Col. Joseph Mayo, Jr.

With two of Pickett's brigades losing momentum, it fell to Brig. Gen. Armistead's men to attempt the breakthrough. As his brigade crossed the Emmitsburg Road, Armistead, who was on foot, raised his hat upon the tip of his sword and shouted to those who could hear him, "Boys give them the cold steel!" With a roar, his men rushed toward the Angle, racing across the ground where Garnett's brigade had left its dead. Armistead's brigade rushed over the wall, routing the 71st Pennsylvania and Cushing's artillerymen, who numbered no more than 150 men together. Armistead grabbed hold of the wheel of an abandoned cannon (one of the three abandoned pieces that Cushing's gunners had not pushed to the wall) and urged his men to turn the guns on the Yankees. For an instant, Armistead's men were inside Union lines.

Brig. Gen. George Jerrison Stannard commanded a brigade of nine-month Vermont troops that flanked Kemper's Virginia brigade. A teacher and clerk in civilian life, Stannard compiled an impressive record in the Union army. On July 3, at Gettysburg, he was wounded in the right thigh by a shell fragment. (Library of Congress)

But this moment did not last long. When the 71st Pennsylvania gave way, it unmasked Webb's second line, which consisted of the 72nd Pennsylvania (and two companies of the 106th Pennsylvania attached to it). This regiment stood on the crest of the ridge, 280 feet from the stone wall. It rose from its prone position and volleyed, decimating Armistead's band. Armistead went down, struck in the chest, left leg, and left arm. His men stood for a few minutes, firing into the 72nd Pennsylvania without any cover, but soon, more Union troops surged into the area, sewing up the breakthrough. One of Gibbon's staff officers, Lieut. Frank Haskell, galloped to Col. Norman Hall, ordering him to send two regiments to rescue Cushing's cannon. Hall dispatched all five regiments, which pushed their way through the small copse of trees. Further, Haskell ordered the 72nd Pennsylvania to advance—although it took several tries to do so—and in five or ten minutes, 1,200 Union infantry rushed on Armistead's position.



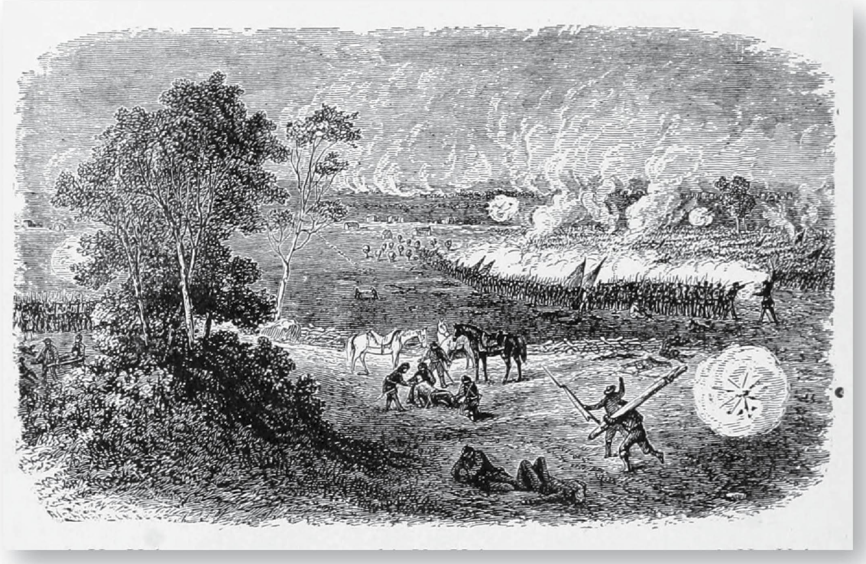
Brig. Gen. James Lawson Kemper commanded one of Pickett's brigades. At Gettysburg, Kemper received a gunshot wound to the abdomen. Using a blanket as a stretcher, several of his men carried him off the field. Because of the severity of his wounds, the Confederates had to leave Kemper behind at the Bream's Mill field hospital, where he was captured by Union troops on July 5. He recovered from his wound and, after the war, he served four years as governor of Virginia. (Library of Congress)

Armistead could not have brought more than 200 men over the wall with him, and with federal troops closing in on two sides, his men could go nowhere except in retreat. One of those who put discretion above valor, Pvt. Erasmus Williams of the 14th Virginia, later wrote, "There was nothing to do but get away as best we could, so I struck across a field to our rear." Williams did not make it more than thirty yards before a ball went through his left wrist. He considered himself lucky.

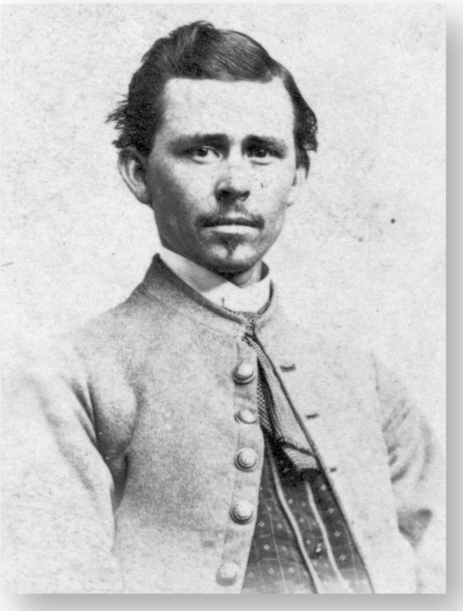
Any of Armistead's group who chose to remain inside Union lines were killed or captured. Sgt. Leander Blackburn had been struck down crossing the field, but the flag of the 53rd Virginia had gone over the wall in the hands of another. That man was killed and the flag captured. The color bearer of the 3rd Virginia (of Kemper's brigade) had also gone over the wall. Lieut. Alexander McCuen of the 72nd Pennsylvania ordered him to surrender the flag, but that color bearer fought back. With a flash of his sword, McCuen felled him and claimed the flag as a trophy. All around, Union and Confederate forces fought brutally, wielding their empty rifles as clubs. So recollected a soldier in the 72nd Pennsylvania, “It was a rough and tumble fight.”

Unable to flee, Armistead gave a Masonic cry of distress, which captured the attention of Capt. William H. H. Bingham of Hancock’s staff. Under Bingham’s direction, Union soldiers carried Armistead to the George Spangler farm. Initially, the examining surgeon declared Armistead’s wounds recoverable, but to everyone’s surprise, he died around noon on July 4. In Armistead’s absence, Col. William R. Aylett took command of the brigade.

As Pickett’s division came undone in its forlorn assault, Pettigrew’s division tested its luck against Brig. Gen. Alexander Hays’s division. Like Gibbon’s men, Hays’s soldiers waited patiently as the Confederates came into view. Behind the line, along with his staff, Hays galloped back and forth, shouting encouragement. Sgt. Benjamin Hirst of the 14th Connecticut recalled looking left and right down the line, watching his comrades go through their pre-battle rites. Every countenance, Hirst wrote, was full of “Intense anxiety.” He wrote, “One is looking at the Far off Home He will never see again. Another is looking at [photographs of] his Little ones, and he mechanically empties his Cartridge Box before him determined to part with Life as Dearly as possible. Other ones you can see are communing with Him before whom many of us will have to shortly appear.” Then, Hirst heard an officer shout advice: “We must hold this Line to the Last Man. The Fate of the whole Army now rests with you. Don’t fire until you get the order, and then fire Low and Sure.”



This illustration depicts Stannard's Vermont brigade (3rd Brigade, 3rd Division, 1st Corps) attacking Kemper's Virginia brigade. The Vermonters are facing north, firing into the right flank of the Virginians. In the foreground, staff officers and stretcher bearers gather around the prostrate form of Maj. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock, who fell wounded behind the Vermonters. (Library of Congress)



Sgt. William Wallace Williams belonged to Company K, 9th Virginia Infantry, recruited from Portsmouth, Virginia. He participated in Pickett's Charge and was captured near the Angle.

Union authorities held him at Point Lookout prison camp until February 1865 when he was exchanged and returned to the Confederacy. (Library of Congress)

Soon, the order, “Fire! Fire! Fire!” rang along the line. Hays’s men volleyed. Without orders, they began reloading, pouring shot after shot into the rebels, who were easily seen, out in the open. Sgt. Hirst jotted a narrative of the oaths and imprecations he heard as the fighting reached its crescendo: “Give them Hell x x x. Now We’ve got you. Sock it to the Blasted Rebels. Fredericksburg on the other Leg. Hurah, Hurah, the first Line is broken. Never mind who is Hit. Give them Hell again.”

Pettigrew’s division stopped dead in its tracks, about 150 yards from the stone wall—the inner part of the Angle. Unable to move forward, Pettigrew’s men returned fire, hoping that reinforcements would come to bail them out. Col. W. S. Christian of the 55th Virginia recollected, “We stood there to be shot at, and that was about all that we did.”

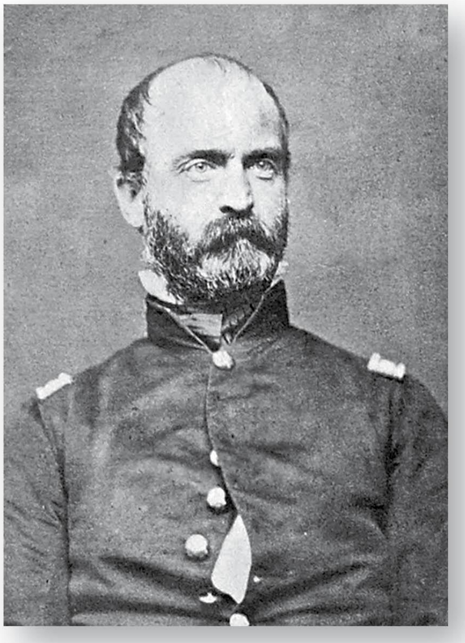
Indeed, Pettigrew’s Confederates took shocking losses. Company I, 11th North Carolina, lost every man but two. Another unfortunate company—Company A, 11th Mississippi—lost 100 percent, every single man killed, wounded, or captured. Two brigade commanders fell. Nearing the stone wall, a rifle ball struck Col. Birkett Fry in the thigh. (This was his second injury of the day. During the cannonade, a piece of shell had struck him in the right shoulder.) Unable to retreat, Fry became a prisoner of war. Col. James K. Marshall was struck in the head by two rifle balls, killed instantly. The divisional commander—Pettigrew—also became a casualty. As he ushered his men across the Emmitsburg Road, his horse was killed. As he regained his feet, Pettigrew discovered that the bones in his left hand had been broken by canister shot. He retired to the rear on foot, but never relinquished command of his division.

Pettigrew’s demise came quickly because several Union regiments flanked the left of his line, creating a crossfire. Due to an oversight, one Union regiment, the 8th Ohio, had not been recalled from skirmish duty beyond the Emmitsburg Road. The quick-thinking Ohio commander, Lieut. Col. Franklin Sawyer, gathered his men along a fence that ran perpendicular to the Emmitsburg Road and soon his men began shooting into Pettigrew’s exposed flank. In a few minutes, two regiments from Col. Eliakim Sherrill’s brigade joined the 8th Ohio at its advanced position. Sherrill’s men made a left wheel out of Ziegler’s Grove, forming a hinge at the Abraham Brian farm.

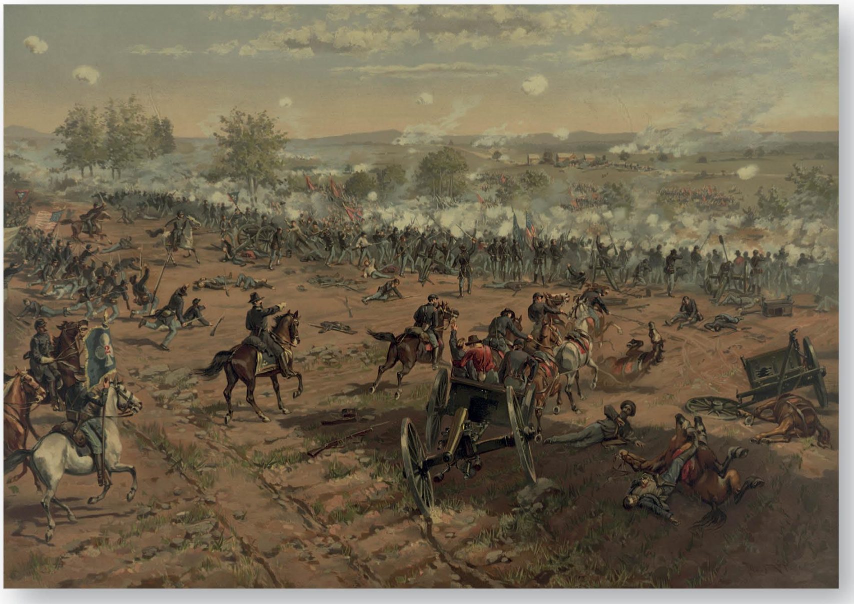
This small arms fire decimated Brockenbrough’s and Davis’s brigades. Corp. Lewis A. Ball of the 126th New York was part of the contingent that hit Brockenbrough’s left. He wrote:

> The enemy advanced to within from ten rods in some places, to twenty in others, when they broke and ran, mostly to the rear; but I should think a thousand threw away their arms, and waving their handkerchiefs or hats—anything to indicate their surrender—came into our lines. In this attack I think the brigade killed and wounded as many as we numbered, and captured as many more.

Much of the Union’s quick success had to do with the intuition of the brigade commander, Col. Sherrill, who ordered this flanking maneuver. But Sherrill never lived to be praised for it. As he led his men forward, he fell mortally wounded by a shot through the bowels. For him, this maneuver had been a last-ditch effort to restore his honor. Technically, he was under arrest, having been censured by Hancock for disobeying orders. Under advisement of his officers, Hancock released him, and in his final action of the war, Sherrill simultaneously met glory and death. He died early the next day at the George Spangler farm. Command of his brigade fell to Lieut. Col. James Bull.



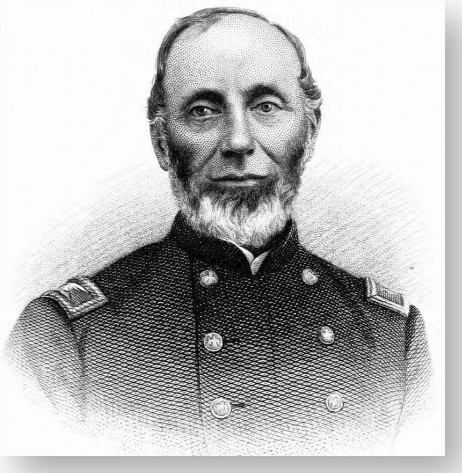
Prior to the Civil War, Brig. Gen. Lewis Armistead had experienced twenty-eight years of service with the U.S. Army. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Armistead resigned his commission and traveled across the country from Los Angeles to offer his services to the Confederacy. At Gettysburg, he commanded the Confederate brigade that temporarily broke through the Union line at the Angle. Inside Union lines, Armistead received three gunshot wounds. He died the next day of fever induced by those injuries. (The History Collection/Alamy Stock Photo)



In 1887, Swedish painter Thure de Thulstrup completed this painting, "Hancock at Gettysburg," which depicts the climax of the Confederate attack. It correctly depicts Brig. Gen. Webb's brigade defending the Angle while grappling with Pickett's division hand to hand. The copse of trees appears at the far left, middle distance. From the left side, Col. Norman J. Hall's brigade rushes to Webb's assistance. (Library of Congress)

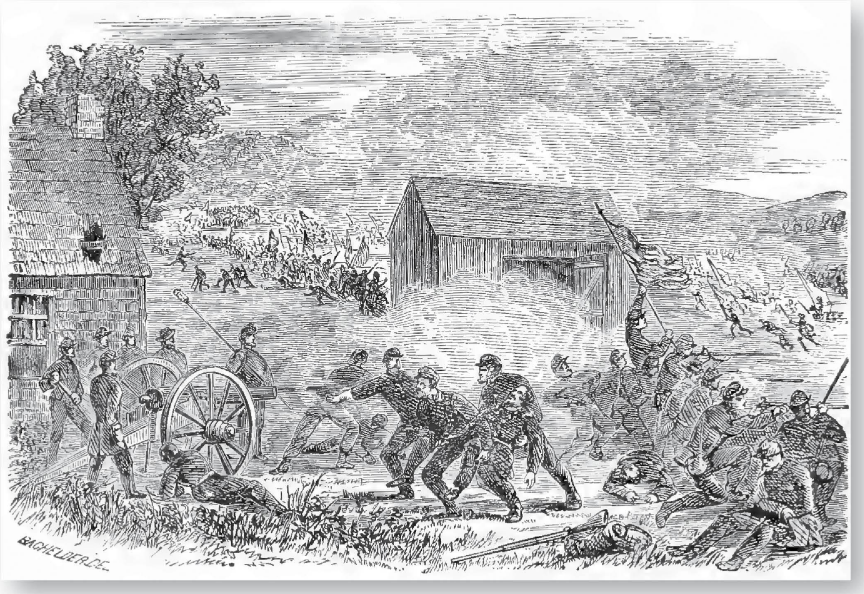
In a few minutes, Trimble's two brigades (and two of Brockenbrough's regiments that had been left behind during the initial advance) pushed through the retreating elements of Pettigrew's division. Trimble's division likewise met this same furious crossfire. Staff officers from Longstreet galloped up to Brig. Gen. Lane, warning him about the Union flanking party. Lane, who had just dismounted from his wounded horse, ordered his two left regiments to deal with the threat, but he received some pushback from one of his regimental commanders, Col. Clark Avery of the 33rd North Carolina, who gestured to Pickett's retreating men. Avery said, "My God, General, do you intend rushing your men into such a place unsupported, when troops on the right are falling back?" Convinced of the futility of continuing forward, Lane decided to withdraw. As he wrote, he considered it "useless to sacrifice my brave men." The division commander, Trimble, may have had some say in this, for he directed Lane's men to reform in rear of the artillery on Seminary Ridge. But not long after this, Trimble received a wound to his left leg. An ambulance drove him to the Samuel Cobean farm where a surgeon amputated the damaged limb.

With Lane's brigade pulling out, the other brigade, Lowrance's, headed forward alone. It struck the fences along the Emmitsburg Road, and just like Pettigrew's division, it struggled to get over them. Infantry and artillery fire hit Lowrance's brigade, reducing it, in Lieut. Henry Moore's words, "to a mere skirmish line." Moore called to the commander of the 16th North Carolina, asking him what should be done. Capt. Abel S. Cloud replied, "We hold on here until we get help." Gamely, Lowrance's men fired from behind the broken and toppled fence rails, looking over their shoulders to see if another assault wave was coming. Each time they looked to the rear, they saw Confederates retreating to Seminary Ridge. Eventually, Union fire slackened and squads from Hays's division bolted over the wall to capture prisoners and battle flags. Those rebels capable of flight ran pell-mell, but a great many could not make it out. Lieut. Moore had to surrender to Union forces. His company had lost 100 percent of its number either killed, wounded, or captured. His regiment came out of the fight with only forty men under the command of a lieutenant.



Col. Eliakim Sherrill commanded the 3rd Brigade, 3rd Division, 2nd Corps. A former Congressman and state senator from Geneva, New York, Sherrill had been horribly wounded in the face at the Battle of Maryland Heights in September 1862. After a two-month recuperation, he returned to the army. During Pickett's Charge, Sherrill received a gunshot wound to the bowels. He died the next day at 8.00 a.m. (Public domain)

As Pickett's, Pettigrew's, and Trimble's divisions gave way, Maj. Gen. Anderson's division entered the fray. Two of Anderson's brigades, Wilcox's and Lang's, had temporary orders to report to Pickett. As Pickett's division began falling apart, Wilcox received orders from Pickett's staff to advance and reinforce the division. These two brigades stood along the Emmitsburg Road near the Klingel farm. With little ado, the soldiers shouldered their weapons and passed through Alexander's artillery, Lang on the left and Wilcox on the right. However, no one advised Wilcox, who had temporary command of both brigades, that Pickett had obliqued north. Due to the smoke, Wilcox could not see his target. Without orders to the contrary, he advanced directly east opening a gap between his troops and Pickett's.


BACHELDER DEL.

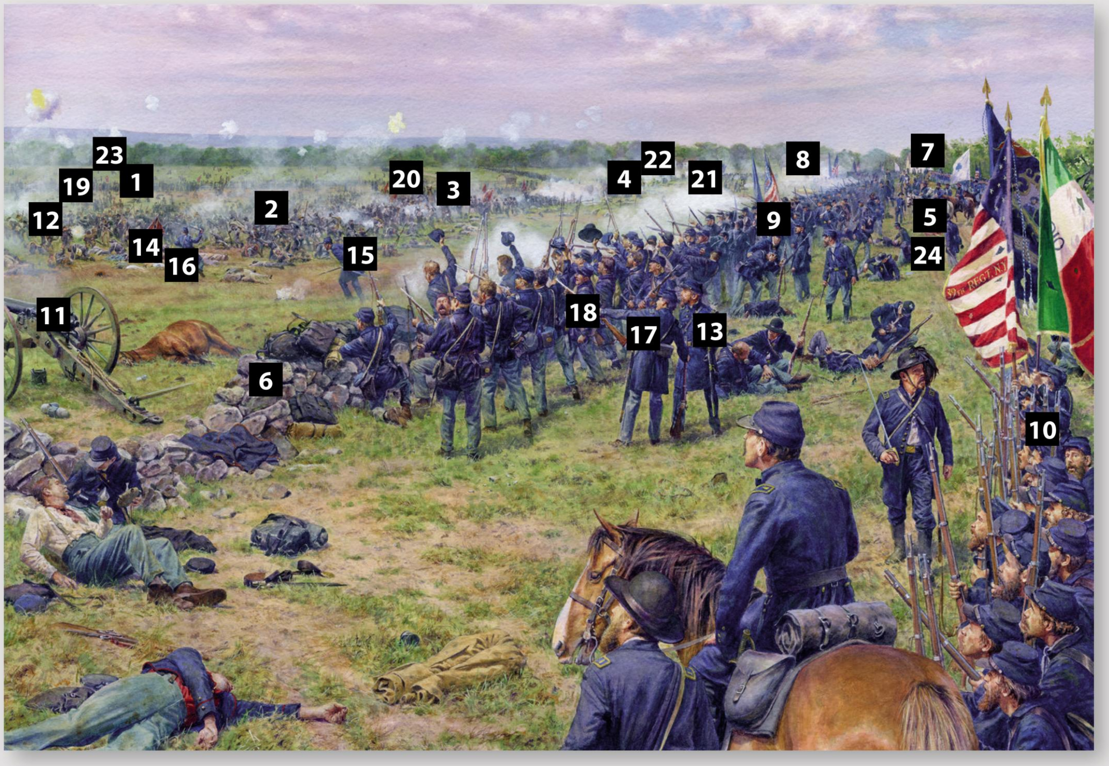
This illustration depicts the evacuation of Col. Eliakim Sherrill by stretcher bearers from the 39th New York. At the moment he received his death wound, Sherrill had just ordered the 126th New York to wheel into the Brian farmyard. Sherrill's July 12 funeral procession in Geneva, New York, brought out hundreds of mourners. So recollected a local newspaper: "The streets were thronged with sad, curious faces, and martial dirges filled the air, and the slow, muffled clatter of hoofs, and the long mournful lines of carriages, and the march of soldiers, who had passed unharmed through the death they were now following, and the riderless horse, slowly stepping just back of its dead rider, sleeping under the grand Stars and Stripes… It was a noble tribute, all this, and we were proud and yet sad for the dead hero who deserved it all." (Public domain)

Wilcox and Lang did not get far before they collided with Union forces. To their left, almost at right angles to their axis of advance, they discovered Stannard's Vermont brigade stretched across Plum Run. The Vermonters were facing north, firing into Pickett’s retreating men. When he saw Lang’s men coming through the smoke, Col. Wheelock Veazey ordered his men to “about face” and fire into the Floridians. At the same time, Stannard pulled the 13th Vermont back into the main line, but he sent four companies of the 14th Vermont to the assistance of Veazey’s regiment. To Lang and Wilcox, it appeared as if they were being attacked by a whole division, and they ordered their line to halt. Lang wrote, “The noise of artillery and small-arms was so deafening that it was impossible to make the voice heard above the din, and the men were by this time so badly scattered in the bushes and among the rocks that it was impossible to make any movement or to check the enemy’s advance.”

The whole situation confused Wilcox. He could not see Pickett’s men, and he had no idea where he should go to support them. Unable to come up with another plan, Wilcox galloped back to the Emmitsburg Road and pleaded with Alexander’s artillerymen, asking them to provide support. The artillerymen gave him disappointing news. They had wasted all their ammunition during the cannonade and their resupply had not yet reached them. Frustrated, Wilcox galloped back to his men and ordered them to withdraw. In his action report, he wrote, “knowing that my small force could do nothing save to make a useless sacrifice of themselves, I ordered them back.”

In its short engagement with the Vermonters, Wilcox’s brigade lost about 250 officers and men. Lang’s brigade lost heavily as well, although its casualty figures are less certain. The 16th Vermont scooped up more than 100 prisoners from Lang’s brigade, suggesting that total losses for July 3 were in the hundreds.

Although Anderson had three more brigades to commit, Longstreet ordered him to cease the attack. From his position near the Spangler farm, Longstreet had seen enough. As Pickett’s men came streaming back in small groups—some wounded, some not—he became convinced that any further attempt to assault the Union line would end in failure. He barked at British observer Arthur Fremantle, “We’ve attacked and been repulsed: look there!” Without hesitation, Longstreet mounted his horse and found Anderson, telling him to stop the advance. Anderson wrote that Longstreet said that, “it was useless, and would involve unnecessary loss, the assault having failed.” Accordingly, Anderson ordered his three remaining brigades to stay put.



PICKETT'S CHARGE

Around 3.15 p.m., Brig. Gen. Johnston Pettigrew's division clambered over fences that bordered the Emmitsburg Road (**1**). The brigades commanded by Col. Birkett Fry (**2**), Col. James Marshall (**3**), and Brig. Gen. Joseph Davis (**4**) surged onto land owned by Abraham Brian. With that, they came into rifle range of Union infantry commanded by Brig. Gen. Alexander Hays (**5**).

Hays's division reclined in wait, hidden behind a low stone wall (**6**) that ran along the crest of Cemetery Ridge. The 108th New York held the right of Hays's line, just beyond the Brian house (**7**). The 111th New York came next, occupying a position on the east side of the Brian barn (**8**). Two companies of the 39th New York linked to the 111th's left, followed by the 12th New Jersey, the 1st Delaware, and the 14th Connecticut (**9**). The 125th New York and two additional companies of the 39th New York (**10**) formed a reserve line atop the crest. An abandoned cannon belonging to Battery A, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery (**11**), marked the division's left flank.

A rail fence (**12**) ran through the field south of the Brian buildings. When Pettigrew's infantry began scaling this fence, the Union regimental commanders gave orders for their men to rise up and fire. Maj. Theodore G. Ellis (**13**), the commander of the diminutive 14th Connecticut (only 170 strong), recalled, "No firing was done till the enemy reached the last fence, about 150 or 200 yards off, when I gave the command. For a few minutes there was a roar of musketry."

This fire stopped Pettigrew's advance in its tracks. Capt. Samuel Fiske of the 14th Connecticut called the fire "murderous." He wrote, "Our … continual and terrible musketry-fire cut them all to pieces. Their lines wavered, re-formed, closed up as the men fell, rallied many times, and pressed forward, but finally were compelled to fall back."

As Pettigrew's division gave way, Ellis spied the flag of the 14th Tennessee (**14**) planted in the ground, halfway between his line and the enemy. The entirety of the 14th Tennessee's color guard had been killed, wounded, or routed; the flag remained caught in no man's land. Ellis called for volunteers to run into the field and take the colors, and three men responded. One of them, Sgt. George N. Brigham, was struck in the side by an enemy ball just as he mounted the stone wall. Another man, Capt. John C. Broatch (**15**), also jumped at the chance, but he was beaten to the prize by the third volunteer, Sgt. Maj. William Bliss Hincks (**16**), a twenty-one-year-old merchant from Bridgeport, Connecticut. Hincks had been occupying the extreme left of his regiment, firing a Sharps Rifle. Behind him, 2nd Lieut. William H. Hawley (**17**) carried another Sharps Rifle, and after he loaded it, he swapped it with Hincks's empty weapon. When Hincks heard Ellis's call to seize the enemy flag, he dropped his rifle (**18**), drew his sword, charged into the field, and captured the colors. For his gallant act, on December 1, 1864, Hincks received the Medal of Honor.

After Pettigrew's division gave way, two brigades from Maj. Gen. Isaac Trimble's division—Col. W. L. J. Lowrance's (**19**) and Brig. James H. Lane's (**20**)—entered the fray. These brigades also suffered heavily from rifle and cannon fire. Additionally, several Union regiments (**21**)—the 8th Ohio, 1st Massachusetts Sharpshooters, and the 126th New York—pivoted into the Confederate left flank from the vicinity of the Emmanuel Trostle farm (**22**), creating a crossfire.

By 3.30 p.m., slowly but surely, the Confederate infantry gave way, receding back toward Seminary Ridge (**23**). Altogether, Pettigrew's and Trimble's divisions had lost about 2,162 men killed, wounded, or captured. Nearby, Maj. Gen. George Pickett's and Maj. Gen. Richard Anderson's divisions counted up another 3,200 losses. "The repulse," wrote one of Pettigrew's staff officers, "to judge from the results, was fatal to our campaign in Pennsylvania… It must always remain a sealed question, whether or not Cemetery Hill could be taken with the forces engaged."

Meanwhile, Union losses amounted to only 1,500 killed, wounded, or captured. Brig. Gen. Hays mourned the loss of his favorite horse, Leet (**24**), who had been mortally wounded in the breast by three balls. The losses in his division amounted to 238 killed, 542 wounded, and thirty-three missing. The aftermath of Pickett's Charge shocked Hays, a veteran of the Mexican–American War. Writing to his mother-in-law, he declared: "Such a scene of carnage I never imagined. Carnage himself [if an artist] could not paint the picture. Dead horses, shattered carriages, dead and dying men, in all the last agonies of death for two full hours, would have paralyzed anyone not trained to the 'butcher trade.'"

All along the Union line, the victorious 2nd Corps troops began collecting prisoners and trophies. Altogether, Union troops captured twenty-nine flags. Brig. Gen. Hays, who had already had two horses shot from under him, galloped over to jubilant soldiers belonging to the 126th New York. He said, "Boys, give me a flag." Turning to his adjutant, Capt. George P. Corts, and his aide, Lieut. David Shields, Hays told each to grab a captured emblem. Mounting their horses, they galloped in front of the division, dragging the flags in the dust. Lieut. Shields later called it “the grandest ride men ever took.”

As the three officers rode down the line, soiling the captured banners, Union soldiers cheered lustily, tossing their caps into the air. A few angry Confederates took long-range shots at Hays and his staff, but did no harm. More than fifty years later, Shields reflected:

> The years have rolled away past half a century, but from out their dimness comes ever the fond remembrance of that wonderful ride at Gettysburg when the beaten enemy had recoiled in broken and disordered ranks [that] sought again the protection of the friendly woods and their masked batteries along Seminary Ridge, our gallant general leading, his aides following at a fast gait, the trailing flags, the resounding cheers of the enthusiastic troops, the spirit of victory that animated us—in all the story of the war there comes to me nothing like it.

For the next hour, Confederate forces scrambled to patch up the center of their line. Lee appeared at the front, riding among his routed troops, speaking encouraging words to them. He said, “All good men must rally. We want all good and true men just now.” In almost every encounter, Lee’s men cheered him. But frustration marred a few meetings. At one point, Wilcox approached, clearly distressed. With tears in his eyes, Wilcox complained, “General Lee, I came into Pennsylvania with one of the finest brigades in the army of Northern Virginia and now my people are all gone. They have all been killed.” According to British observer Arthur Fremantle, Lee extended his hand, hoping Wilcox would embrace it. Taking responsibility for the disaster, Lee said, “Never mind, General, all this has been my fault—it is I that have lost this fight, and you must help me out of it the best way you can.”

Maj. Gen. Isaac Ridgeway Trimble, a former railroad engineer from Maryland, assumed command of Maj. Gen. William D. Pender's division after Pender had been mortally wounded on July 2. Near the end of Pickett's Charge, Trimble received a gunshot wound to the left leg. Initially taken to the David Whisler farm on the Chambersburg Pike, Trimble was driven by ambulance to the Samuel Cobean farm on the Carlisle Road, where the damaged limb was amputated. Because of the severity of his wound, Trimble could not be transported back to Virginia and he fell into Union hands. On July 6, Robert McCurdy, president of the local railroad, offered to care for Trimble in his house on Chambersburg Street, but when several Gettysburg citizens complained of Trimble's good treatment, Union forces relocated him to the Seminary hospital where he remained under guard—much to Trimble's disgust. (Library of Congress)

The repulse of Pickett's, Pettigrew's, and Trimble's divisions flustered Lee. Everywhere he went, Lee apologized to his men, repeating the phrase, "It's all my fault." As the reality of the disaster sunk in, he turned to Fremantle and commented, "This has been a sad day for us, Colonel—a sad day, but we can't expect always to gain victories." According to Fremantle, at no point did Lee exhibit visible sadness. He recollected, "His face, which is always placid and cheerful, did not show signs of the slightest disappointment, care, or annoyance." Lee's positive attitude seemed to buoy his soldiers. When Fremantle passed by a cluster of artillerymen, he heard one of them say, "We've not lost confidence in the old man: This day's work won’t do him no harm. ‘Uncle Robert’ will get us into Washington yet; you bet he will!”

Brig. Gen. Alexander Hays commanded the 3rd Division, 2nd Corps. His troops repulsed the back-to-back assaults made by Pettigrew’s and Trimble’s divisions. He joked to a friend, “My defenses were stone walls, and since Jackson is dead I think I have a claim to his title.” Ten months later, Hays gave his own life, killed by a gunshot wound to the head at the Battle of the Wilderness. (Library of Congress)

Of course, Lee had reason to be concerned about the losses. The afternoon attack on July 3 had taken a tremendous toll. Pickett’s division had taken 5,848 officers and men into the attack. It had lost 2,853, or forty-eight percent. Pettigrew’s and Trimble’s divisions took 6,700 officers and men into the fight on July 3 and lost 2,162 of them, a combined loss of thirty-two percent. Finally, Wilcox’s and Lang’s brigades took 1,600 officers and men into the fight and lost about 400, one of every four men. In short, the Confederate attack involved about 14,100 infantry and it claimed about 5,400 men as casualties. Union casualties were far fewer, about 1,500 killed and wounded.

The scene atop Cemetery Ridge beggared description. Capt. Benjamin W. Thompson of the 111th New York, an officer who had been wounded by an exploding shell during the bombardment, had gone to the Leister farm to seek medical attention. At dusk, after having his wound dressed, he returned to Cemetery Ridge. He never forgot the sight. He wrote:

> Just as the sun was setting I went to the crest of the ridge and took a look at the field. No words can depict the ghastly picture. The track of the great charge was marked by bodies of men in all possible positions, wounded, bleeding, dying and dead. Near the line where the final struggle occurred, the men lay in heaps, the wounded wriggling and groaning under the weight of the dead among whom they were entangled. In my weak and exhausted condition I could not long endure the gory, ghastly spectacle. I found my head reeling, the tears flowing and my stomach sick at the sight. For months, the specter haunted my dreams and even after forty-seven years it comes back as the horrible vision I have ever conceived.

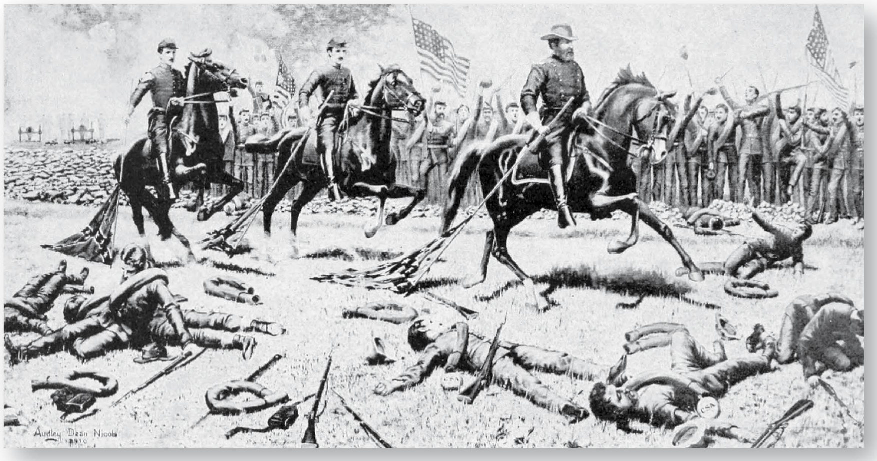
Truly, no one can revel in war.

SOUTH CAVALRY FIELD

Pickett’s Charge—as the attack came to be known—wrapped up around 4.00 p.m. As the last Confederate infantry gave way, Meade arrived on the scene to observe the attack’s final moments. During the morning, Meade had kept his headquarters at the Leister home, but during the bombardment, as shells began crashing in the farmyard, he relocated to the Peter Frey farmstead. There, an exploding shell wounded his chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Butterfield. After that, Meade moved his headquarters yet again, this time to Powers Hill. After the repulse of Pickett’s men, Meade arrived at Ziegler’s Grove and he began riding south along Cemetery Ridge.

This photograph depicts five sergeants from Company D, 13th Vermont. They are (left to right): Sgt. Marquis E. Marrs, Sgt. Julius F. Densmore, Sgt. Henry O. Clark, Sgt. George Stevens, and Sgt. William Blake. At Gettysburg, Marrs was mortally wounded and Densmore killed. (Public domain)

Along the way, as his men cheered him, Meade learned that two of his leading generals had fallen. During the height of the attack, Maj. Gen. Hancock had received a severe wound in his right thigh. While he was directing his infantry, a ball had struck the pommel of his saddle, driving a piece of the bullet and a tenpenny nail into Hancock’s flesh. Before Meade could consult with him, Hancock had been evacuated to a field hospital on the Frey farm. Also, Brig. Gen. Gibbon had been struck by a ball in his left arm, near the shoulder. Likewise, Gibbon had to be evacuated. Although both generals eventually recovered from their wounds, Meade had to appoint a new commander for the 2nd Corps on the spot. He selected Brig. Gen. William Hays—a supernumerary who had been attached to army headquarters—to that position.



As Pettigrew’s and Trimble’s Confederates gave way, Brig. Gen. Hays grabbed a captured flag and told two staff officers—1st Lieut. David S. Shields and Capt. George P. Corts—to do likewise. They rode along the line, trailing the rebel banners in the dust. This illustration by Audley Dean Nichols depicts that event. (Library of Congress)

As Meade rode south, several mounted generals joined his entourage. One of them, Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton, the army’s cavalry commander, urged an immediate counterattack. According to a newspaper article written years after the war, Pleasonton spoke plainly. To Meade, he said, “General, I will give you half an hour to show yourself a great general. Order the army to advance, while I take the cavalry, get in Lee’s rear, and we will finish the campaign in a week.” Perhaps Pleasonton did not say these exact words, but he definitely advised a counteroffensive and it stoked Meade’s imagination. As Meade reported later, “As soon as the assault was repulsed, I went immediately to the extreme left of my line, with the determination of advancing the left, and making an assault upon the enemy’s line.”

Meade arrived at Little Round Top, the rocky hill that had been the scene of dramatic fighting on the previous day. There, he met two of his corps commanders, Maj. Gen. George Sykes and Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick; also his chief engineer, Brig. Gen. Gouverneur Warren; and a divisional commander, Brig. Gen. Samuel Crawford. For about a half hour, Meade observed Confederate lines, even as bullets whizzed from nearby Devil’s Den. The panoramic view from Little Round Top gave Meade confidence. He believed his left flank stood a decent chance of making Pleasonton’s proposed counterattack. Specifically, Meade wanted Sykes’s men to retake the ground lost by the 3rd Corps on July 2. Looking through his field glasses, Meade could see Union soldiers sitting uncomfortably along Houck’s Ridge. Meade asked Sykes who commanded those troops. Sykes replied that they were Crawford’s men. Meade replied, “Tell Crawford to take his command and clear those woods, he will find nothing but stragglers.” Sykes repeated these orders to Crawford, who was nearby. Crawford dispatched couriers to carry those orders to the front.

Sgt. Maj. William Bliss Hincks (shown here as first lieutenant) served in the 14th Connecticut. When gunfire brought down the color bearer of the 14th Tennessee, Hincks leaped over the wall and captured the flag, even as friendly fire crisscrossed the field over which he passed. For this act, Hincks received the Medal of Honor. (Library of Congress)

At this point, Pleasonton repeated his plea. Meade needed to order a general assault, not merely a foray with Crawford’s division. Meade considered the proposition, but hesitated. At this moment, he declared, he could not be certain that Lee wanted to retreat. If Pleasonton wished for a general assault, his cavalry needed to confirm that the Confederates were retreating. In the aftermath, Pleasonton believed that Meade wasted valuable time. As he later wrote, “I was so impressed with the idea that Lee was retreating that I again earnestly urged General Meade to advance the army; but instead of doing so, he ordered me to send some cavalry to ascertain the fact.” Pleasonton’s belief was misguided. Lee’s army had suffered a tremendous blow—and indeed, Lee had already decided to retreat back to Virginia—but he had not yet sent out any orders. For now, Lee wanted his men to remain in place and repel any attack that might come their way.

Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton commanded the Army of the Potomac's Cavalry Corps. In the late afternoon of July 3, Pleasonton accompanied Meade in a ride to Little Round Top to observe the enemy position. In a highly suspect account written in 1879 to the *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, Pleasonton argued that, during this ride, he encouraged Meade to commence a counterattack immediately after the repulse of Pickett's Charge. If true, Meade did not succumb to Pleasonton's goading, but he did authorize a cavalry probe directed against the southern end of Lee's line near Warfield Ridge. (Library of Congress)

No existing historical document outlines the orders sent by Pleasonton, but clearly, he wanted his cavalry to probe the Confederate right flank and rear. When selecting units for this task, he did not have many options. At the moment, his 2nd Division was wrapping up its combat at East Cavalry Field. Meanwhile, the bulk of his 1st Division was undergoing a resupply at Westminster, Maryland. Another brigade, Col. Pennock Huey's, was guarding a supply depot at Manchester, Maryland, too far away to be of any assistance.

Only one of Pleasonton's units, Brig. Hugh Judson Kilpatrick's 3rd Division, was in a position to carry out this reconnaissance. Earlier in the day, at 8.00 a.m., Pleasonton had given Kilpatrick instructions to get into position on the Confederate right flank and cover the Emmitsburg Road. Using back roads, Kilpatrick's men made a nine-mile trek to the southern end of the battlefield. At 10.00 a.m., they arrived at Bushman Hill, a wooded rise southwest of Big Round Top. Kilpatrick ordered Brig. Gen. Elon Farnsworth to deploy skirmishers and push forward over the hill. At the edge of the woods, the Union troopers came in contact with a skirmish line that belonged to Brig. Gen. Evander Law's division. The two sides popped away at each other, but soon withdrew out of small arms range.

At 4.30 p.m., when Meade approved the reconnaissance, Pleasonton assumed that Kilpatrick's men were still at Bushman Hill, awaiting his instructions. Unfortunately, Pleasonton did not yet know that Kilpatrick did not possess his whole division, but only half of it. Hours earlier, without Kilpatrick's knowledge, Brig. Gen. Custer's brigade had been retained at East Cavalry Field, where it played a decisive role in the defeat of Stuart's division. This left Kilpatrick with only one brigade—Farnsworth's—at 1,925 officers and men.

In addition to reduced numbers, Kilpatrick had to deal with a well-prepared foe. The Confederates who occupied the southern end of Lee's line had a good inkling that an attack was coming. At 3.00 p.m., they became alerted to another Union cavalry unit approaching from the south. Unbeknown to Kilpatrick, Brig. Gen. Wesley Merritt, who commanded a brigade of 1,300 cavalry and a battery of horse artillery, made an independent probing action. Merritt's brigade had started the day at Emmitsburg, seven miles to the south. At noon, long before Pleasonton's meeting with Meade on Little Round Top, Merritt received orders from Pleasonton to proceed up the Emmitsburg Road and attack the enemy's right and rear, or, as Merritt described it, to "annoy" the flank of the Army of Northern Virginia. Merritt's men reached the field just as Pickett's Charge reached its climax. His cavalry dismounted near the David Currens farm and formed a skirmish line. One regiment, the 6th Pennsylvania Cavalry, held the right of the line along the road, with the 1st, 2nd, and 5th U.S. Cavalry extending Merritt's line west toward the George Bishop farm. Six guns belonging to Battery K, 1st U.S. Light Artillery, unlimbered in the rear.

The arrival of Merritt's troopers caused a wave of activity in Law's division. Most of Law's men were deployed in line of battle at the base of Big Round Top. However, Law kept one brigade—Col. William White's (formerly G. T. Anderson's)—in reserve atop Warfield Ridge. Additionally, a battalion from the 1st Texas and 100 dismounted troopers belonging to the 1st South Carolina Cavalry supported them. From their position near the Alexander Currens farm, which was half a mile north of Merritt's position, White's troops formed a line of battle and deployed skirmishers. As Merritt's dismounted troopers came within range, White's skirmishers returned fire. Neither side possessed much protection, only thick fields of grain. Although the skirmishing lasted for hours, neither side reported heavy losses. Confederate casualties remain unknown, but Merritt counted up forty-nine killed or wounded. In the end, Merritt called off his advance. Believing he had complied with his orders—to annoy the enemy flank—he ordered his men to stay out of range for the rest of the evening.

Brig. Gen. Hugh Judson Kilpatrick commanded the 3rd Division, Cavalry Corps. A brash West Pointer known as "Kill-Cavalry" because of his propensity for using up men and horses in a vain quest for glory, Kilpatrick accepted orders to probe the Confederate right flank. Believing the extinction of Lee's army was nigh, Kilpatrick ordered Brig. Gen. Elon Farnsworth's brigade to execute a mounted charge against a Confederate artillery position atop Warfield Ridge. Although some historians later questioned the traditional version of events, most primary accounts contend that Kilpatrick and Farnsworth had a short altercation. When Farnsworth questioned the wisdom of attacking across rough terrain, Kilpatrick retorted by calling Farnsworth a coward. Whichever version of events was true, Farnsworth attacked as Kilpatrick directed. (Library of Congress)

Just at this moment, around 5.00 p.m., Brig. Gen. Kilpatrick received his new orders from Pleasonton. A courier carried them; Pleasonton did not deliver them himself. According to a witness, the courier told Kilpatrick to "play all of your guns; charge in their rear; create a strong diversion." In a metaphorical sense, Kilpatrick could not "play all his guns," since Custer's brigade had been waylaid at East Cavalry Field, but for whatever reason, Kilpatrick did not complain about this. By this point, he must have realized that Merritt's brigade was on his left flank and he presumed that it would keep Law's Confederates busy while he swept in behind them. Observing the ground to the north of Bushman Hill, Kilpatrick noticed a weak point in the Confederate line, the Plum Run Valley. Col. White's left flank ended on the fields of the Bushman farm, where a narrow lane ran north–south through the property. East of the Bushman lane, only a thin line of Texas skirmishers held the field. If Kilpatrick's cavalry moved quickly, they could turn west, get atop Warfield Ridge, and capture Law's artillery and possibly White's infantry with it. It would be a risky operation, but it was the kind of brash action for which Kilpatrick was widely known.

Promptly, Kilpatrick called together his staff, his regimental commanders, and Brig. Gen. Farnsworth. According to those present, Kilpatrick exhibited excitement. He proclaimed, "The whole rebel army is in full retreat. I have just heard from the right, and our cavalry is gobbling them up by thousands. All we have to do is charge, and the enemy will throw down their arms and surrender." He gestured toward Warfield Ridge, where Law's men were holding Merritt in check. The assembled Union officers could see two Confederate batteries perched upon the hill, Capt. James Reilly's Rowan Artillery and Capt. William Bachman's German Artillery. They would be the intended targets.

At this point, debate ensued among the Union officers, although several historians have since disagreed about the exact nature of the dialogue. Some believed Farnsworth loudly protested Kilpatrick's order to attack, saying that a mounted attack across rocky ground would lead to the destruction of his brigade. In a huff, Kilpatrick called Farnsworth a coward, which prompted Farnsworth to snap back in anger, "General, if you order the charge, I will lead it, but you must take responsibility." Kilpatrick ordered it and Farnsworth reluctantly carried it out.

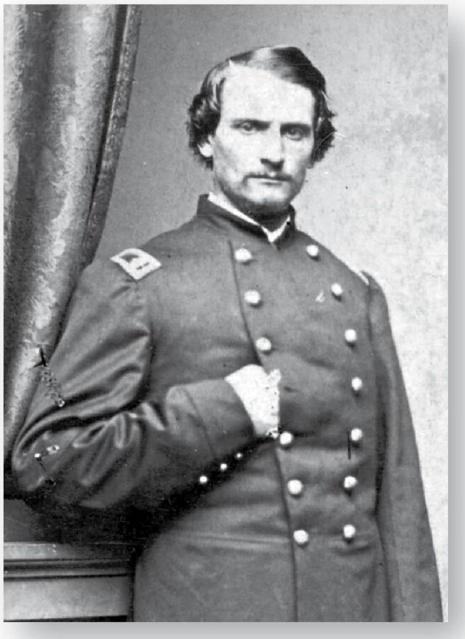
More than one witness agreed with that version of events, if not the exact wording. But in recent years, some historians have questioned this interpretation. They say no such exchange took place. A heated discussion may have occurred, but it did not involve anyone questioning Kilpatrick's leadership or Farnsworth's courage. One Union officer maintained that Farnsworth received Kilpatrick's orders with optimism. Farnsworth said, "If anybody can charge, we can, sir."

Whichever version was true, Farnsworth dutifully mounted and led the attack, which consisted of two columns. On the left, Col. Nathaniel Richmond led 458 men belonging to the 1st West Virginia Cavalry. Behind the West Virginians, the 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry—508 troopers—took position in a column of squadrons. On the right, two battalions of the 1st Vermont Cavalry constituted the other column. In front, Maj. William Wells commanded four companies of the 1st Vermont, about 230 men. Behind Wells, Capt. Henry C. Parsons commanded four more companies, another 260 men. Four more companies of the 1st Vermont constituted the brigade's skirmish line. Kilpatrick's horse artillery—Battery E, 4th U.S. Light Artillery—unlimbered atop Bushman Hill and provided long-range support. The last regiment, the 5th New York Cavalry, took position behind the hill in support of the battery. Farnsworth and his adjutant took a position at the head of Wells's battalion.

Farnsworth's attack got under way around 5.30 p.m. With bugles blaring, the horses and riders came thundering out of the tree line south of the Bushman farm. The left column—the 1st West Virginia with the 18th Pennsylvania behind it—did not get far. These riders struck an unseen stone wall on the southern end of the Bushman property and found several companies of the 1st Texas defending it. Unable to make it over the wall, the riders looped back and returned to their starting point. This abortive attack cost the 1st West Virginia twelve men. The 18th Pennsylvania lost twenty-two.

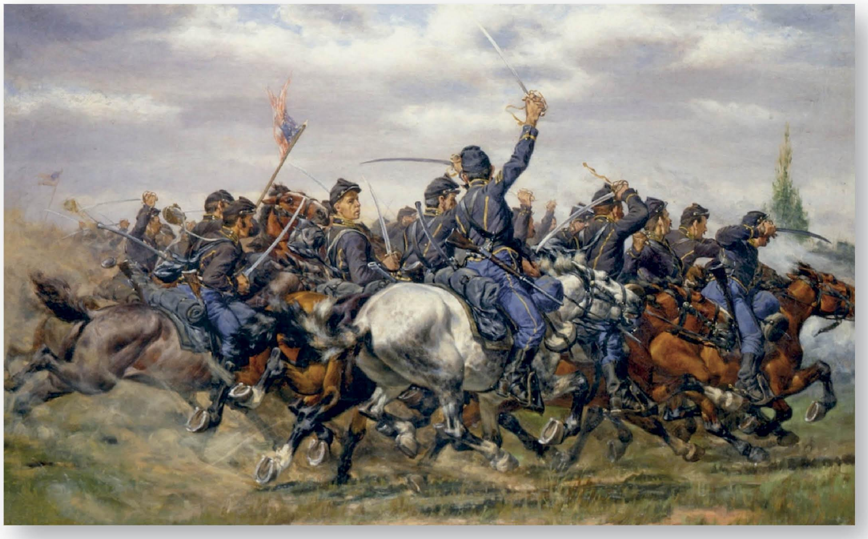
Meanwhile, on the right, Wells's battalion charged into the Plum Run Valley. These troopers managed to break through. Leading from the front, Farnsworth and Wells steered their column to the left and proceeded up the slope of Warfield Ridge, heading for the two Confederate batteries. But as they ascended the ridge, the Union troopers discovered more than just artillery facing them. To their surprise, a lone infantry regiment—the 9th Georgia—had redeployed in the nick of time to rescue the batteries from capture. Capt. George Hillyer commanded this regiment. With just eighty men, he pulled the 9th Georgia off the line at the Emmitsburg Road and moved his men to the brow of Warfield Ridge, directly in the path of Farnsworth's cavalry. Hillyer recollected, "When they [the Union cavalry] saw our battle flag, they seemed to hesitate, as if they did not expect to find any infantry at that point. And, as one knows, it was rarely ever a healthy thing for cavalry to fight Confederate infantry."

In truth, Wells's battalion had halted because it nearly lost its brigade commander. During the opening dash through the skirmishers, Farnsworth's horse had been mortally wounded and the general required a new mount. Taking a new ride from a nearby enlisted man, Farnsworth tried to rejoin the attack, trailing after his column, which Wells now led.



Brig. Gen. Elon John Farnsworth had started the Civil War as a staff officer for Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton. (This image depicts him wearing a staff officer's uniform.) On June 28, 1863, in a decision that smacked of political intrigue, Farnsworth received a promotion to brigadier general and assumed command of the 1st Brigade, 3rd Division, Cavalry Corps. On July 3, Farnsworth led a mounted attack against Confederate troops atop Warfield Ridge and was killed in the attempt. After the war, Confederate accounts uniformly agreed that Farnsworth ended his own life by putting a gun to his head. However, modern theories contend that Farnsworth died by Confederate hands, and not by his own. Early in the attack, his mount fell mortally wounded. He took a new horse and continued the charge, but he fell in the vicinity of the Bushman farm, pierced by five gunshot wounds. (Courtesy of the Medford Historical Society & Museum Civil War Photo Collection)

From the Confederate perspective, the Vermonters appeared to stall in the fields below Warfield Ridge, unsure of what to do, and this gave Capt. George Hillyer an opportunity for his men to take aim. As he remembered it, "So, there was this mass of men and horses right in front of us, and in easy range." The ensuing blast caused Wells's troopers to scatter "right and left," so wrote Hillyer, "and those who still kept on horseback, scampered to a skirt of timber some 200 yards away."

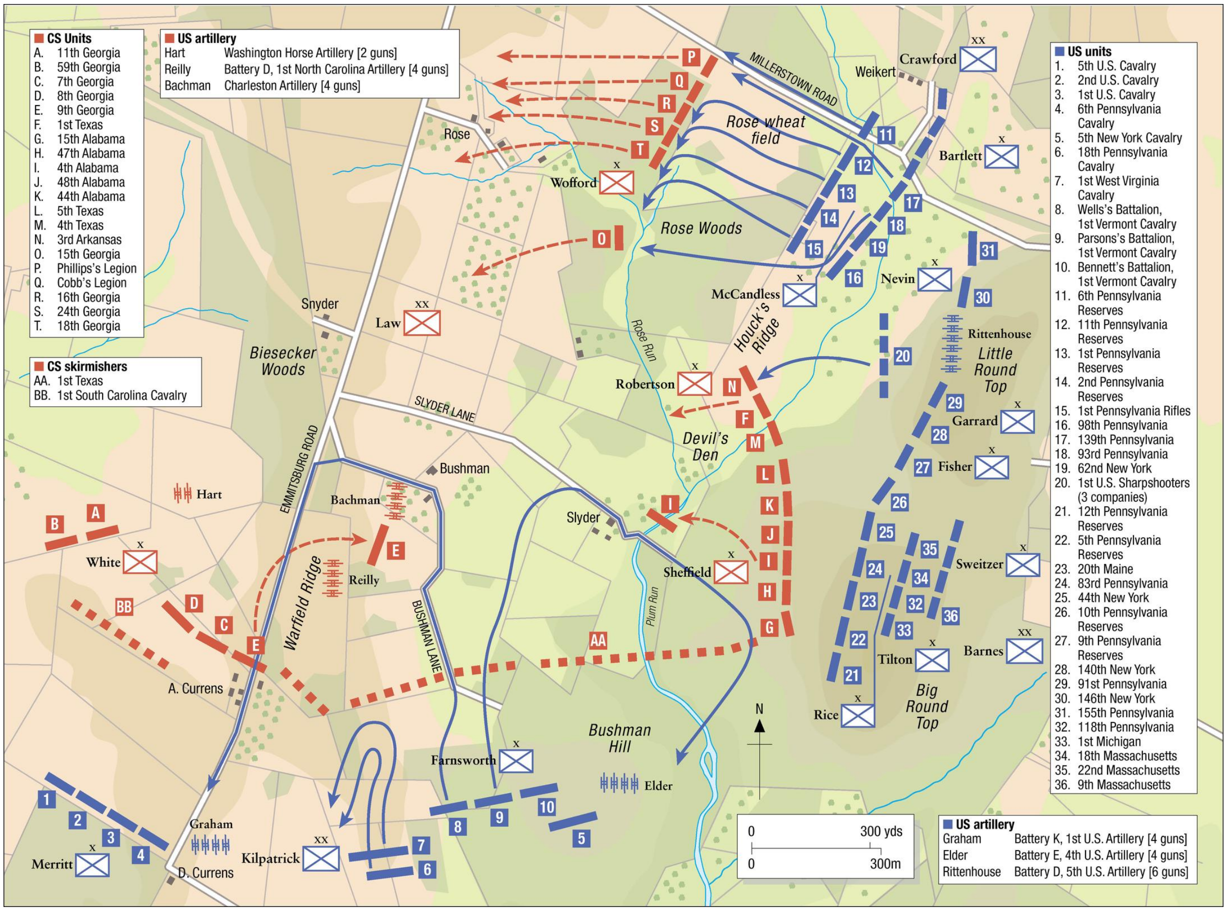


William B. T. Trego's 1887 painting "The Pell-Mell Charge" gives a good impression of the conditions experienced by Farnsworth's troopers on July 3. In a tight column, with sabers overhead, galloping over broken terrain, the men and horses of the 1st Vermont Cavalry thundered into an ultimately futile attack. A Union officer recalled, "Soon, scattered over the field, rushing to the rear for shelter from the murderous fire, were dismounted men and riderless horses, injured and uninjured, while the dead and dying marked the course of the charging column. These were the first fruits of the abundant harvest that was gathered through the wild insanity that ruled the hour." 1st Vermont lost sixty-five officers and men and twice as many horses killed or wounded. (Public domain)

The Vermonters retreated any which way they could, but it appears that most of them survived by galloping straight ahead and then turning left—or south—down the Emmitsburg Road. The troopers passed through the space once occupied by Hillyer's regiment, running a gauntlet between the 7th Georgia (west of the road) and the 1st Texas (east of the road). Amazingly, most of the column made it back to their own lines unscathed. However, Farnsworth did not return. No one ever saw him fall, and his body was discovered a few days later by Union troopers. He had been pierced by five balls, one in each leg, one through the shoulders, one through the stomach, and one above the heart.

After Wells's battalion disappeared behind Confederate lines, Kilpatrick ordered Parsons's battalion to enter into the fray. Parsons's troopers entered into the wide, open fields of the John Slyder farmyard, finding nothing but disarray. The Confederate skirmishers were retreating and panicked and riderless horses galloped hither and yon. Rather than veer west as Wells and Farnsworth had done, Parsons changed course to the east, heading for the western foot of Big Round Top. He led his troopers into the Slyder farm lane, shouting for them to head to the woods at the base of the hill. But then, at an unfortunate moment, a lone infantry regiment, the 4th Alabama, appeared on the northeast side of the Slyder lane. Guided by a staff officer, this regiment came off the slope of Big Round Top for the purpose of interdicting Parsons's cavalrymen. Even though the 4th Alabama moved on foot and across a rugged slope, it arrived in time to deliver a volley into the middle of Parsons's battalion. The Alabamians killed several horses, bringing the column to a crashing halt. One Alabamian called for Parsons to surrender. As Parsons raised his saber, another Confederate placed the muzzle of his rifle at Parsons's breast and fired. Although badly wounded, Parsons did not fall from his saddle. Parsons's horse was hit as well, but it leaped over the stone wall on the south side of the Slyder lane. With rider still attached, it made a mad dash for freedom. Many of the Vermonters in the rear of the column followed suit, leaping over the farm lane's wall, heading back to their starting point. They sabered any Texas skirmishers in their way and even drove a dozen of them into their own lines, taking them prisoner.

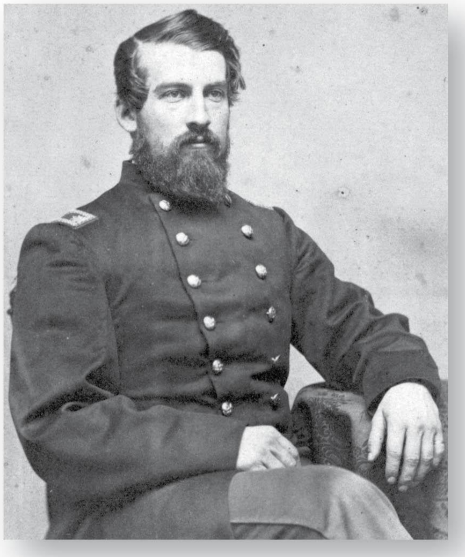
But the charge did not end. At the front of the column, Capt. Oliver Cushman took command. Pistol in hand, he charged ahead with the 1st Vermont's lead squadron, crashing his way through the 4th Alabama. Cushman's contingent—which probably numbered no more than fifty men and their horses—ascended the hill and burst into a D-shaped meadow. There, on the east side of it, they came into contact with an infantry line composed of Col. James Sheffield's brigade. The soldiers of the 15th Alabama occupied the east side of the meadow and they exhibited surprise upon seeing a contingent of enemy horsemen coming on their rear. Without losing their cool, the Alabamians performed an "about face" and fired a withering volley into Cushman's riders.



CS Units
A. 11th Georgia
B. 59th Georgia
C. 7th Georgia
D. 8th Georgia
E. 9th Georgia
F. 1st Texas
G. 15th Alabama
H. 47th Alabama
I. 4th Alabama
J. 48th Alabama
K. 44th Alabama
L. 5th Texas
M. 4th Texas
N. 3rd Arkansas
O. 15th Georgia
P. Phillips's Legion
Q. Cobb's Legion
R. 16th Georgia
S. 24th Georgia
T. 18th Georgia
US artillery
Hart Washington Horse Artillery [2 guns]
Reilly Battery D, 1st North Carolina Artillery [4 guns]
Bachman Charleston Artillery [4 guns]
CS skirmishers
AA. 1st Texas
BB. 1st South Carolina Cavalry
US units
1. 5th U.S. Cavalry
2. 2nd U.S. Cavalry
3. 1st U.S. Cavalry
4. 6th Pennsylvania Cavalry
5. 5th New York Cavalry
6. 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry
7. 1st West Virginia Cavalry
8. Wells's Battalion, 1st Vermont Cavalry
9. Parsons's Battalion, 1st Vermont Cavalry
10. Bennett's Battalion, 1st Vermont Cavalry
11. 6th Pennsylvania Reserves
12. 11th Pennsylvania Reserves
13. 1st Pennsylvania Reserves
14. 2nd Pennsylvania Reserves
15. 1st Pennsylvania Rifles
16. 98th Pennsylvania
17. 139th Pennsylvania
18. 93rd Pennsylvania
19. 62nd New York
20. 1st U.S. Sharpshooters (3 companies)
21. 12th Pennsylvania Reserves
22. 5th Pennsylvania Reserves
23. 20th Maine
24. 83rd Pennsylvania
25. 44th New York
26. 10th Pennsylvania Reserves
27. 9th Pennsylvania Reserves
28. 140th New York
29. 91st Pennsylvania
30. 146th New York
31. 155th Pennsylvania
32. 118th Pennsylvania
33. 1st Michigan
34. 18th Massachusetts
35. 22nd Massachusetts
36. 9th Massachusetts
US artillery
Graham Battery K, 1st U.S. Artillery [4 guns]
Elder Battery E, 4th U.S. Artillery [4 guns]
Rittenhouse Battery D, 5th U.S. Artillery [6 guns]
MILLERSTOWN ROAD
Crawford
Weikert
Bartlett
Rose
Wofford
Rose wheat field
Rose Woods
Nevin
McCandless
Houck's Ridge
Rose Run
Snyder
Law
Biesecker Woods
Robertson
Rittenhouse
Little Round Top
Garrard
Fisher
Devil's Den
SLYDER LANE
EMMITSBURG ROAD
Bushman
Hart
Bachman
Slyder
White
Reilly
Warfield Ridge
Sheffield
Sweitzer
BUSHMAN LANE
Plum Run
Tilton
Barnes
A. Currens
Rice
Big Round Top
Bushman Hill
Farnsworth
Elder
Graham
Merritt
D. Currens
Kilpatrick
N
0 300 yds
0 300m

South Cavalry Field

At this point, most of Cushman's Vermonters developed second thoughts about continuing their charge, so they turned and bolted back down the hill, eventually heading south, bound for their own lines. Ten of them, with Cushman leading, came on at a full charge. All of them were brought down within feet of the Alabamians' line. Even after being dismounted, the Vermonters fired back at their adversaries. Lieut. John Adrian of the 15th Alabama approached Capt. Cushman, who was lying beside his dead horse. Adrian yelled, "Now you surrender." Cushman replied, "I'll be damned if I do," and fired his pistol. In an instant, a Confederate ball struck Cushman in the face, with the ball passing under his nose. Blood gushed from the wound and Cushman fainted. He remained insensible for the next twenty-four hours, but was recovered by Union forces the next day. He returned to service only to be killed in action in June 1864.



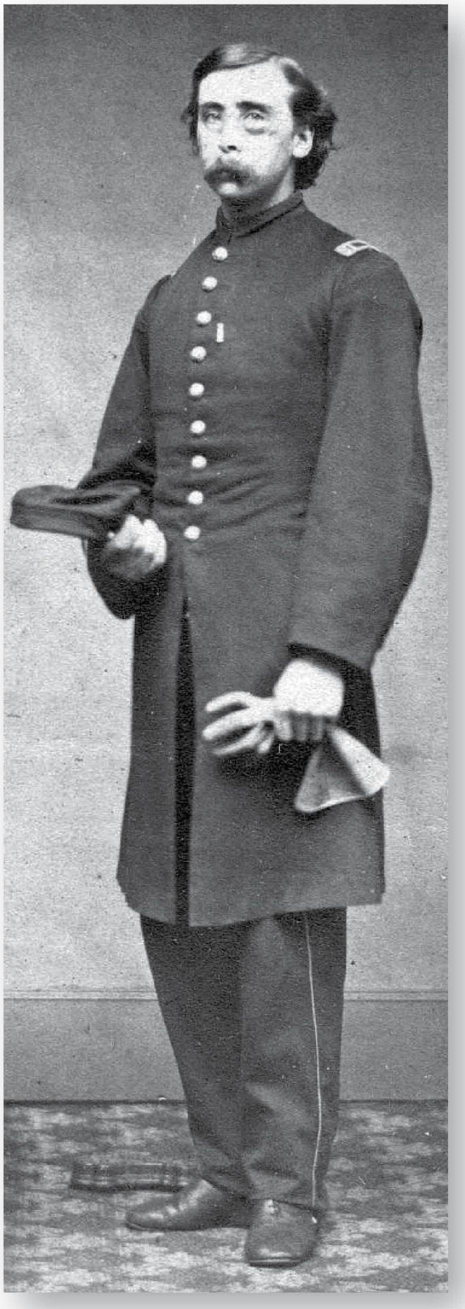
Maj. William Wells commanded a four-company battalion belonging to the 1st Vermont Cavalry. After Farnsworth lost his mount, Wells led the column past the Bushman farm, charged through the enemy batteries, and took his men back into Union lines. In what amounted to a veritable miracle, Wells survived without injury and he received the Medal of Honor for his efforts. Fifty years later, when the state of Vermont dedicated a statue in honor of Wells and his troopers, a former Confederate general, Evander Law, came to speak. A witness to the charge, Law remembered: "During the whole of this brief but bloody drama, which came directly under my own eyes, I recall distinctly two conspicuous figures riding side by side at the head of the charging column. One I afterward learned was … Major William Wells, [who] commanded as brave a body of horsemen as ever drew sabre." (Library of Congress)

Cushman's wounding later led to one of the battle's great controversies. In the aftermath, Confederate accounts argued that it had not been Cushman who fell near the 15th Alabama, but the ill-fated Farnsworth. Further, many Confederate veterans—even eyewitnesses to this scene—believed that Cushman (whom they wrongly identified as Farnsworth) had taken his own life, aiming his last pistol shot at his own head. Presently, the exact circumstances of Farnsworth's death cannot be known; however, the evidence suggests that Farnsworth did not die by his own hand and that he did not die on the slopes of Big Round Top.

In any event, the late-afternoon attack by Union cavalry on July 3 resulted in a spectacular failure. Whatever Kilpatrick had attempted to do, he had not succeeded in it. A mounted attack could not have expected much success while passing over such uneven terrain. Maj. Charles Capehart of the 1st West Virginia called it the worst place for a cavalry charge. He wrote, "The whole ground over which we charged was very adverse in every particular, being broken and uneven and covered with rock… Any one not cognizant of the minutia of this charge upon infantry, under cover of heavy timber and stone fences, will fail to form a just conception of its magnitude."

Farnsworth's brigade counted ninety-eight losses on July 3, including sixty-five from the 1st Vermont. Of course, these were the human casualties. Probably, Farnsworth's brigade lost twice as many horses killed, wounded, or captured, which produced terrible consequences for the 3rd Division's mobility. The gravely wounded Capt. Henry Parsons felt sorry for his mount—a scarred-up sorrel he had borrowed from his bugler—who had been wounded several times during the harrowing charge. Parsons's horse had saved his life. He wrote, "How gently he carried me from the field although blood spurted from his side at every step." When Parsons returned to Bushman Hill, reeling from a wound that left his right arm partially paralyzed, the last image before he faded into insentience was that of his poor horse, whose name is now lost to history. Parsons recalled, "And when I was lifted down into unconsciousness, my last recollection was of his great eyes turned upon me as in sympathy and reproof." Meade had wanted a successful counterattack against the Confederate right flank. Even Parsons's horse understood that Kilpatrick had bungled it.

Nor was this the only bungle by Union cavalry. Eight miles west, one regiment found itself overwhelmed at the borough of Fairfield. Earlier that morning, while Merritt's brigade was at Emmitsburg, a civilian arrived with news about an unguarded Confederate wagon train. Considering this news to be genuine, Merritt ordered Maj. Samuel H. Starr to take his regiment, the 6th U.S. Cavalry, to investigate. Happily, a road connected Emmitsburg and Fairfield. Starr's 470 troopers followed it, arriving at Fairfield—a small crossroads with about two dozen structures—around 1.00 p.m. For several hours, Starr and his troopers scouted the countryside and discovered that the unnamed civilian's story was only partially correct. The Confederates had passed through Fairfield with eight wagons, filling them with stolen goods, but it was not the massive supply train that Merritt had supposed.



A student of Dartmouth College who left school to enlist, Capt. Oliver Tucker Cushman commanded Company E, 1st Vermont Cavalry. Leading a contingent of fifty riders, he reached the Slyder farm meadow on the shoulder of Big Round Top before being cut down by a rifle ball that struck him in the face. Cushman fainted from blood loss and remained unconscious until recovered by Union forces. Because Cushman had worn a distinctive white jacket trimmed in gold braid, the Confederates who wounded him believed they had killed a Union general, and thus, Cushman's wounding may have given rise to the myth that Farnsworth had been killed on Big Round Top. Cushman recovered from his wound (the scar under his eye can be seen in this photograph), but he was subsequently killed at the Battle of Haw's Shop on June 3, 1864. (Francis C. Guber Collection)

It would have to do. Starr ordered the column to capture it. The Union troopers headed north along the Fairfield–Ortanna Road. In about two miles, the lead squadron caught sight of this wagon train. But those same Union troopers also discovered Confederate cavalry guarding it. These enemy cavalrymen belonged to Brig. Gen. William E. "Grumble" Jones's brigade, 1,700 strong. Jones and his troopers had been left behind during Lee's advance into Pennsylvania and only now had they rejoined the army. In the morning, Jones reached Cashtown, but in the afternoon, after Pickett's Charge, Lee ordered him to ride south to Fairfield and secure the crossroads. For Lee, these were wise orders. The Army of Northern Virginia needed unfettered access to the Fairfield Road. His army could not retreat without it.

At around 5.00 p.m., on the fields of the John Marshall farm, the wagon train and Jones's brigade passed each other, going in opposite directions. Making no effort to reconnoiter his front, Jones ordered his lead regiment, the 7th Virginia Cavalry, to charge at the distant Union horsemen. Starr saw the Virginians coming, so he ordered his lead squadron to dismount and deploy skirmishers, taking up defensive positions inside an apple orchard behind sturdy fences on both sides of the road. Starr's men blunted the 7th Virginia's charge, which sent it reeling in retreat.

At this point, Starr must have realized that Confederate forces outnumbered his regiment by four to one. He should have mounted up and withdrawn, but the 7th Virginia's retreat convinced him to stick it out. Jones prepared for another attack. He deployed his next regiment, the 6th Virginia Cavalry, into line. He put his other two regiments—the 11th Virginia Cavalry and the rallied elements of the 7th—on either side of the 6th Virginia. Further, he unlimbered his horse artillery, giving it orders to provide cover.

When Jones's men came forward again, the troopers of the 6th U.S. Cavalry stood no chance. The Confederates overran their position, sabering any who did not mount up and leave. Pvt. Charles Miller of the 6th U.S.

Cavalry tried to flee, but his horse was killed underneath him. Rather than run, Miller crawled over to a fence and delivered a few parting shots. “This delay was disastrous on my part,” Miller admitted, “for if I had taken to my heels as soon as my horse fell, possibly I might have escaped, but now they were too close upon me. I did, however, run until my breath was exhausted, unmindful of the shots which struck around me, and the commands to halt, surrender, etc.” In a few minutes, Confederate cavalry surrounded Miller, who had no choice but to toss down his carbine and raise his hands.

By the end of it, the 6th U.S. Cavalry had been cut to ribbons. It lost six killed, twenty-eight wounded (including Maj. Starr who had been shot in the arm), and 208 captured. Jones’s brigade lost fifty-eight. The Union cavalry’s foray to Fairfield gained it nothing but death and humiliation.

MEADE’S COUNTERATTACK

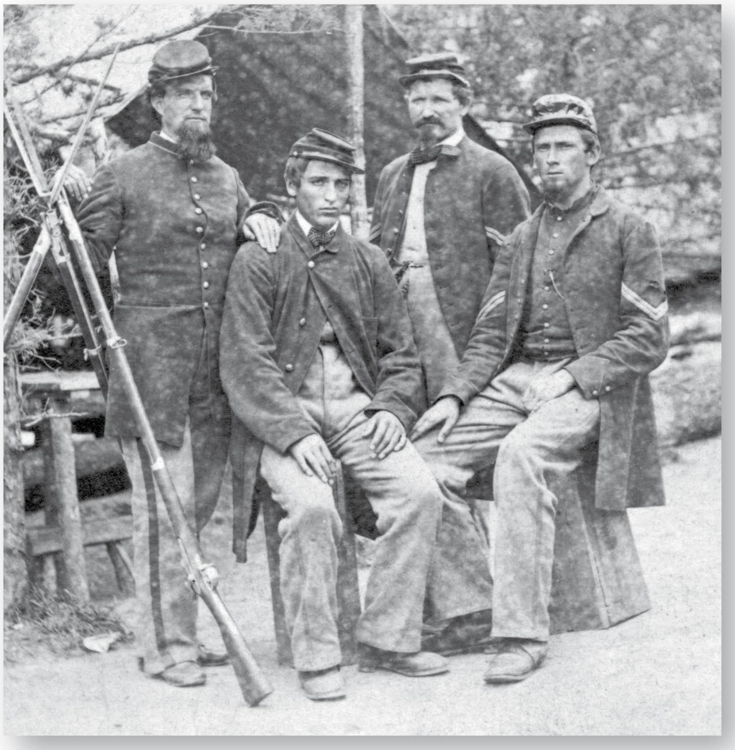
Although the Union cavalry fumbled its actions at South Cavalry Field and Fairfield, Crawford’s infantry gave the Confederates cause for concern.

After receiving Meade’s instructions, Crawford assembled nine regiments for an assault across the George Rose wheat field. Ever since the previous evening, the wheat field had become a no man’s land full of 4,000 dead and wounded from both sides. A Confederate brigade under Brig. Gen. William T. Wofford held Rose’s Woods on the west side of the field. About 300 yards separated Wofford’s men from Crawford’s line, which hunkered down behind the stone wall atop Houck’s Ridge. Crawford’s assaulting force consisted of four regiments from Col. William McCandless’s brigade, one regiment from Col. Joseph Fisher’s brigade, and four regiments from Col. David Nevin’s brigade, about 2,500 men altogether. Five regiments constituted the first line and four regiments formed the second line. Crawford told McCandless to advance across the wheat field and, “if possible, drive out the enemy.”

At 6.00 p.m., McCandless’s first line surged forward. Two regiments, the 6th Pennsylvania Reserves and the 139th Pennsylvania, led the way. They crept westward through the Abraham Trostle Woods, on the north side of the wheat field, aiming for a single artillery piece and three caissons. When the Pennsylvanians reached the gun, the gunners tossed away their implements and ran. As it turned out, the Pennsylvanians had recaptured a gun that had been lost by the 9th Massachusetts Light Artillery on July 2.

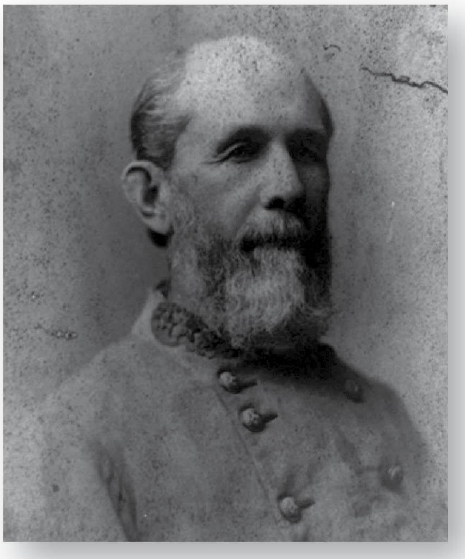
With this gun back in Union hands, McCandless's other regiments advanced in line of battle, cheering wildly. Their attack caught Wofford's men flatfooted. One Union prisoner, a twice-wounded officer named Lieut. James J. Purman, sat behind Wofford's line. When he saw McCandless's men coming, he mocked his captors, "You need not carry me off; our boys are coming." Watching the engagement from the sidelines elated Purman. He remembered, "Although the balls rattled among the rocks and trees about me, I enjoyed the charge hugely, for it meant victory."

Wofford's soldiers were under orders to vacate the area. In essence, their evacuation had been preplanned, but because of the Union attack, they executed it in haste. With Wofford's men on the run, McCandless and his brigade took possession of the "Stony Hill," a rocky outcrop on the west side of the Rose wheat field. But then, the Union soldiers spotted another Confederate unit off to the south, the 15th Georgia. Just minutes earlier, the 15th Georgia's brigade commander, Brig. Gen. Henry Benning, had sent instructions, telling it to connect with Wofford's men. The Georgians reached Rose Hill, a small hill southeast of the Rose farm buildings. They expected to find Wofford's men to the north, but instead, they found McCandless's Pennsylvanians.



This photograph depicts four soldiers from Company B, 1st Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry, one of the units involved in McCandless's attack. They are (left to right): Sgt. Emmanuel C. Metzgar, Corp. William J. Cake, Corp. John M. Wertz, and Corp. George K. Swope. Swope served as regimental color bearer, and had, the previous day, been dragged across Plum Run Marsh by Brig. Gen. Samuel Crawford when the general unexpectedly grabbed hold of the 1st Reserves' battle flag. (Library of Congress)

McCandless turned his regiments against the lone Georgia regiment. He ordered four of his regiments to "about face" and then perform a right-wheel so they all faced south, stacked up in a column of regiments. With the 1st Pennsylvania Rifles in the lead, McCandless's men charged down from Stony Hill, across Rose Run, and up the side of Rose Hill. Capt. Evan M. Woodward of the 2nd Pennsylvania Reserves wrote, "[We] charged through the woods in their rear, running like hounds, and yelping like devils, down through the meadow and up over the steep acclivity on the opposite side, surprising the enemy and taking them in the flank."



Brig. Gen. William Tatum Wofford commanded a brigade in Longstreet's corps. On the afternoon of July 3, it held the front lines at Stony Hill until driven out by McCandless's Pennsylvanians. Wofford had received orders to withdraw, but the sudden appearance of McCandless's men hastened his brigade's departure. An anti-secessionist prior to the war, Wofford served with distinction in the Army of Northern Virginia until he suffered several wounds during the Overland Campaign. Wofford recovered, but eventually surrendered to Union forces at his new command in 1865. He became one of the first Confederate generals to ask for (and receive) a pardon from the U.S. government. (Library of Congress)

The 15th Georgia's commander, Col. Dudley DuBose, ordered a fighting withdrawal and his men retired to the southwest. Suddenly, another Union regiment—the 62nd New York—appeared on the 15th Georgia's right flank and rear, and in the words of a Union officer, it threw the Georgia troops "into the greatest confusion." Capt. Woodward of the 2nd Reserves wrote, "The gallant efforts of their officers to rally them were useless, we had them fairly on the run, and did not cease following them until we had penetrated far into their lines." Col. DuBose admitted, "My men and officers fought bravely, but my loss was immense. How any of us escaped, I do not see." The 15th Georgia took about 260 men into the fight. It lost 101 of its number and its regimental colors captured.

After the Confederates retreated from Rose's Woods, McCandless's troops paused. They saw another line of Confederates farther out, Brig. Gen. Joseph Kershaw's brigade occupying the Joseph Sherfy Peach Orchard. If McCandless wished to continue his reconnaissance, he would have to push his men out into the open and steer them uphill. As daylight faded, it seemed unlikely that he could gain any additional success. Further, his regiments began to lose their integrity. Many of his men broke ranks to scour the area for wounded men. At the Rose farm, the Pennsylvanians found 3,000 rifles collected by the Confederates, now abandoned by Wofford's hasty evacuation. Once McCandless's men evacuated the wounded and corralled their prisoners, they quietly returned to the east side of the wheat field, the place from where they had started.

Meade watched McCandless's attack from Little Round Top. When he saw Wofford's brigade take to its heels, he offered congratulations to Sykes and Crawford who stood nearby. He recognized success when he saw it, but he considered McCandless's attack to be an armed reconnaissance only, and right now, it convinced him that Lee had not yet quit the field. When McCandless's troops took up their former position at the foot of Little Round Top, Meade mounted up with his staff and made haste to the Frey farm. At 8.35 p.m., he sent a short message to Maj. Gen. Henry Halleck, Lincoln's chief military adviser, summing up the late-afternoon offensives: "An armed reconnaissance was pushed forward from the left, and the enemy [was] found to be in force. At present hour all is quiet. My cavalry have been engaged all day on both flanks of the enemy, harassing and vigorously attacking in great success."

Certainly, Meade erred in calling Kilpatrick's efforts a "great success," but he correctly concluded that the Confederates were not yet retreating. Perhaps Meade might have considered adding reinforcements to exploit McCandless's breakthrough, but he possessed few options for that. In theory, the 6th Corps operated as the army's reserve; however, due to the nature of its arrival on July 2, its brigades had been spread all over the field. As Meade later explained:

> The great length of the line, and the time required to carry these orders out to the front, and the movement subsequently made, before the report given to me of the condition of the forces in the front and left, caused it to be so late in the evening as to induce me to abandon the assault which I had contemplated.

Sometime that night, he fell asleep near a boulder, still uncertain of his adversary's intentions.

Col. Dudley DuBose commanded the ill-fated 15th Georgia, which lost 101 officers and men on the afternoon of July 3. Due to a miscommunication, DuBose pulled his troops out of line with the intention of linking up with Wofford's brigade. When Wofford's brigade evacuated sooner than expected, the 15th Georgia found itself cut off and at the mercy of McCandless's infantry. After the war, DuBose served as a one-term U.S. Congressman. This image was taken during his time in office. (Library of Congress)

At about the same time, long after dark, Lee made preparations for his army's retreat. At his headquarters near the Mary Thompson house, Lee met with Brig. Gen. John D. Imboden, who commanded an independent cavalry brigade attached to army headquarters. Lee spoke in calm tones. He told Imboden, "We must now return to Virginia." Imboden had to protect the army's vulnerable ambulance trains. Lee continued, "The duty will be arduous, responsible and dangerous, for I am afraid you will be harassed by the enemy's cavalry."

Unperturbed, Imboden said he was up to the task. Lee laid out the path for the retreat. The army, he said, would move along two pathways. Imboden would screen the retreat along the Chambersburg Pike, escorting the trains for Longstreet's and Hill's corps and Stuart's cavalry division. This column would have to cross South Mountain through the Cashtown Pass and then proceed to Williamsport, Maryland, a small town on the

Potomac River. Once at Williamsport, Imboden could rest his animals for a day or two, but then he would need to ford the river quickly, not stopping until he reached Winchester. Meanwhile, another column would follow a parallel route. Maj. John A. Harman—the chief quartermaster for Ewell’s corps—would lead Ewell’s wagons southwest along the Fairfield Road, passing through South Mountain at Monterey Pass. Lee planned for Harman’s trains to link up with Imboden at Williamsport.

Unfortunately for Lee, an unexpected problem emerged. That evening, 300 Union cavalrymen made a raid against Lee’s pontoon train, which encamped opposite Falling Waters, West Virginia. Back when Lee’s army had invaded, it had brought along sixteen pontoons (thirty-foot-long, flat-bottomed boats). When lashed together, these could be used to make a floating bridge. The pontoon train came across the river with Ewell’s corps, but on June 22, Ewell left it behind at the site of the prewar ferry, with only a handful of teamsters as guards. Lee failed to realize that nearby Union garrison troops might take them. On July 3, an intrepid Union cavalry commander stationed at Frederick, Col. Andrew T. McReynolds, proposed a raid. His divisional commander, Maj. Gen. William French, authorized it. That evening, under McReynolds’s orders, a detachment of Union cavalry under the command of Maj. Shadrack Foley destroyed or captured nearly all of Lee’s pontoons.

The next day, July 4, as the weather turned foul, Lee became concerned that he might need a pontoon bridge if the rain swelled the river such that it could not be forded. He fired off instructions to the commander of his Winchester garrison to have men reassigned to guard the pontoons. Lee did not realize, of course, that his pontoons were already gone.

Not only was the Army of Northern Virginia defeated, but it was stranded on the wrong side of the river.

AFTERMATH

THE RACE TO THE POTOMAC

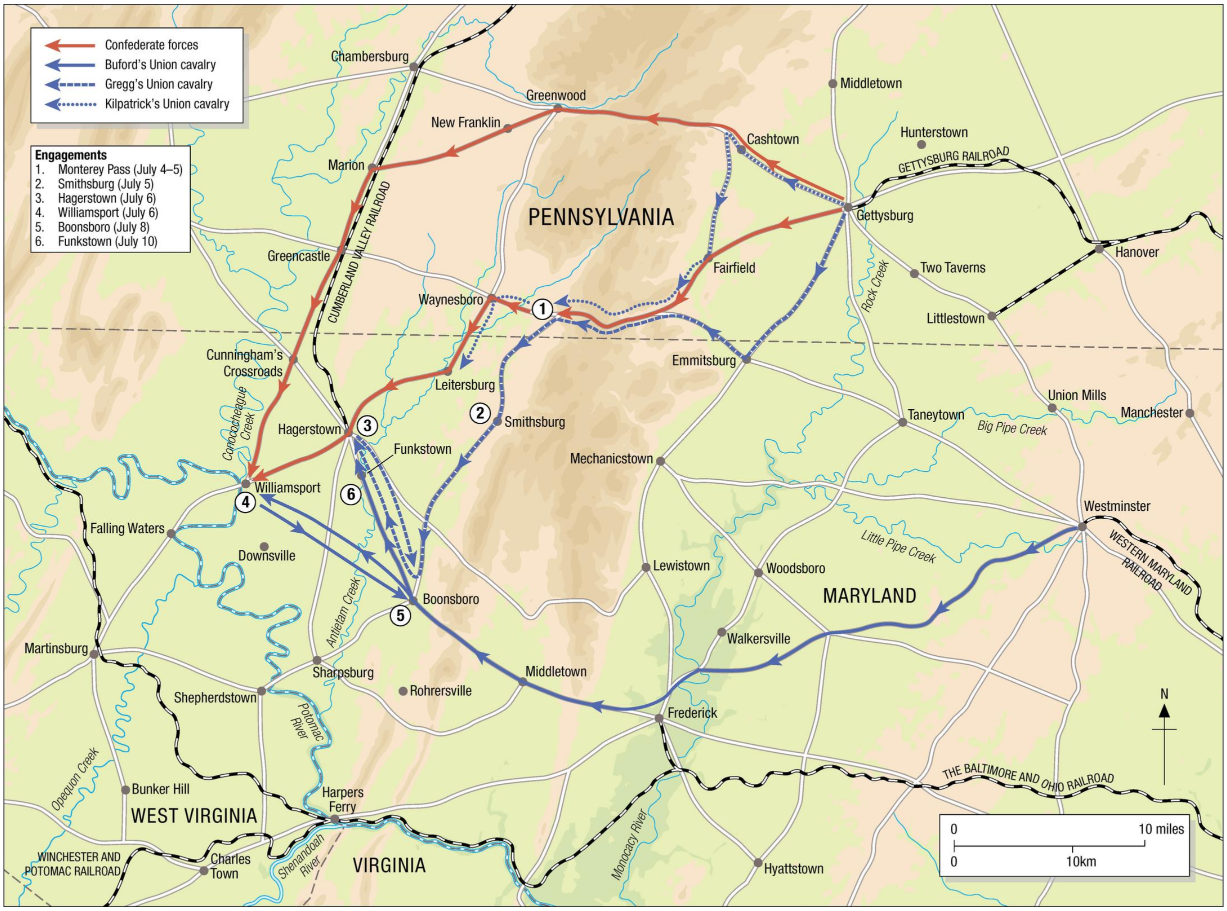
After midnight, July 4, Lee's army commenced its retreat. Over the nighttime hours, the Confederates retracted their lines so that they covered only Seminary Ridge. Ewell's corps abandoned its positions in the borough and from atop Benner's Hill. Longstreet, who had already begun the withdrawal from the Round Tops that previous evening, began moving his troops off Warfield Ridge.

At the same time, the army's wagon trains began moving toward Maryland. Brigade-level quartermaster trains led the column, followed by divisional-level subsistence trains, then by more brigade-level quartermaster trains, and then by ambulance trains. After that, artillery battalions limbered up and followed, with infantry bringing up the rear. Hill's and Longstreet's corps took the road to Cashtown, while Ewell's corps passed through Fairfield. Stuart's cavalry division dispersed itself across the northern column. Some mounted units protected the trains, others acted as scouts, while others acted as rearguards. Stuart led two brigades—Ferguson's and Chambliss's—south to Emmitsburg, and then to Mechanicstown, in an attempt to shield the retreat.

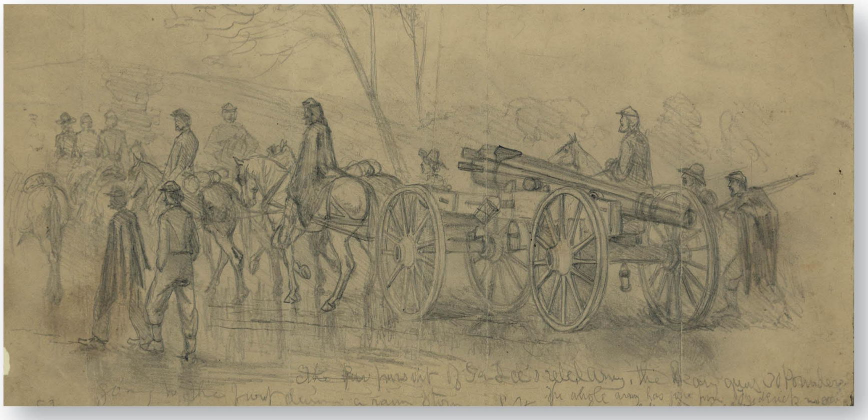
The sights and sounds of suffering patients horrified those assigned to the vanguard. At the front of the column, Imboden listened to the agonized cries of wounded men as the ambulances rocked along the wet roads. He heard one wounded man shout, "Stop! Oh! For God's sake, stop just for one minute; take me out and leave me to die on the roadside." But the wagons could not stop, not for an instant. They needed to reach the Potomac quickly, or else the infantry would be choked behind them. Imboden remembered, "There was no time to fill a canteen with water for a dying man; for, except the drivers and the guards, all were wounded and utterly helpless in that vast procession of misery."

Brig. Gen. John D. Imboden commanded a brigade of independent cavalry that reported directly to Lee’s headquarters. On the evening of July 3, Lee assigned him the critical mission of protecting the ambulance, subsistence, ordnance, and quartermaster trains belonging to Longstreet’s and Hill’s corps. Imboden’s leadership during the Confederate retreat proved invaluable. Not only did his men reach Williamsport in a matter of days, but they repulsed a Union cavalry raid on July 6. Thus, Imboden’s brigade secured the crossings over the Potomac allowing Lee’s army the chance to escape. (NARA)

At that moment, Meade did not know Lee was retreating, and it would take a full day before he learned that crucial news. At dawn on July 4, Meade issued a circular to his corps commanders, clarifying the army’s goals: “The lines as held are not to be changed without orders, the skirmishers being simply advanced, according to instructions given, to find and report the position of the enemy.” Beyond that, Meade authorized his cavalry to take action. Kilpatrick’s division—now reunited—moved south to Emmitsburg and turned northwest, hoping to get itself astride the Fairfield Road, which Meade assumed would be Lee’s line of retreat. Meanwhile, at Westminster, Buford’s division got on the road as well, with orders to swing farther south and move through Frederick. At 7.00 a.m., Meade contacted Halleck, writing, “My pickets are moving out to ascertain the nature and extent of the enemy’s movement. My information is not sufficient for me to decide its character yet—whether a retreat or a maneuver for other purposes.”


Confederate forces
Buford’s Union cavalry
Gregg’s Union cavalry
Kilpatrick’s Union cavalry
Engagements
1. Monterey Pass (July 4–5)
2. Smithsburg (July 5)
3. Hagerstown (July 6)
4. Williamsport (July 6)
5. Boonsboro (July 8)
6. Funkstown (July 10)
PENNSYLVANIA
MARYLAND
WEST VIRGINIA
VIRGINIA
Chambersburg
Greenwood
New Franklin
Marion
Cashtown
Middletown
Hunterstown
Gettysburg
Hanover
Two Taverns
Littlestown
Fairfield
Greencastle
Waynesboro
Emmitsburg
Cunningham’s Crossroads
Leitersburg
Smithsburg
Hagerstown
Funkstown
Mechanicstown
Taneytown
Union Mills
Manchester
Williamsport
Falling Waters
Downsville
Boonsboro
Westminster
Lewistown
Woodsboro
Walkersville
Martinsburg
Sharpsburg
Rohrersville
Middletown
Frederick
Shepherdstown
Bunker Hill
Harpers Ferry
Charles Town
Hyattstown
CUMBERLAND VALLEY RAILROAD
GETTYSBURG RAILROAD
WESTERN MARYLAND RAILROAD
THE BALTIMORE AND OHIO RAILROAD
WINCHESTER AND POTOMAC RAILROAD
Rock Creek
Big Pipe Creek
Little Pipe Creek
Conococheague Creek
Antietam Creek
Potomac River
Opequon Creek
Shenandoah River
Monocacy River
N
0
10 miles
0
10km

The Race to the Potomac


~~The Pur~~ pursuit of Gen Lee's rebel Army. the Heavy guns 32 Pounders

Foul weather marred the Confederate retreat and the Union pursuit. Heavy rain saturated the battlefield starting at 1.00 p.m., July 4, and it continued intermittently until July 13. “I shall never forget … how it rained that night,” remembered a Wisconsin soldier about the evening of July 9, “and how we had to lay in water … all night. The next morning it was not a little amusing to see the men wringing the water from their clothes.” This sketch by Edwin Forbes depicts Union artillery passing through rain during the pursuit. (Library of Congress)

Gingerly, the Army of the Potomac deployed skirmishers. In some sectors, they made contact with Lee’s rearguard, which convinced Meade that the Army of Northern Virginia was still in place and ready for a fight. For instance, at the Rose farm, Col. Hannibal Day’s brigade experienced a rough encounter with Longstreet’s men. At 11.30 a.m., Day’s skirmishers made contact with Longstreet’s rearguard at the Peach Orchard. Two guns from Capt. Basil Manley’s battery began firing, raking the Union line. Promptly, Day ordered his men to lie down. Sgt. Charles Bowen of the 12th U.S. Regulars noted that the artillery fire “was so accurate that we were obliged to lay flat for a while[,] while the shot and shell [came] just whistling over head & exploding over us. One huge piece took nearly the whole hand of an officer who lay near me & covered us with earth.” According to Day, once he became certain that Confederate forces still occupied the Peach Orchard, he withdrew his men to the woods atop Stony Hill.

Around the same time, Union skirmishers became involved in a bloody exchange near the Peter Rogers farm along the Emmitsburg Road. Two regiments—the 2nd Rhode Island and 2nd U.S. Sharpshooters—exchanged fire with skirmishers belonging to the 61st Virginia. This skirmish escalated quickly and both sides fired all afternoon. At one point, the U.S. Sharpshooters recovered a wounded bluecoat who belonged to the 3rd Corps. This poor soldier had been lying between the lines for the past two days, but within earshot of the Confederates. As the U.S. Sharpshooters passed over him, he insisted that he be taken to Meade’s headquarters. He claimed to know important information about enemy movements. While lying in the tall grass, he had overheard Lee discuss plans to retreat. Pvt. Wyman White wrote, “He heard General Lee say that the retreat of his army was positively a necessity for he said that his troops had been repulsed at every point. He also gave orders that the trains be put into motion, and every effort be made to keep all their movements from being known to the

Union Generals, as he expressed it.” White never knew if this wounded soldier ever spoke to Meade.

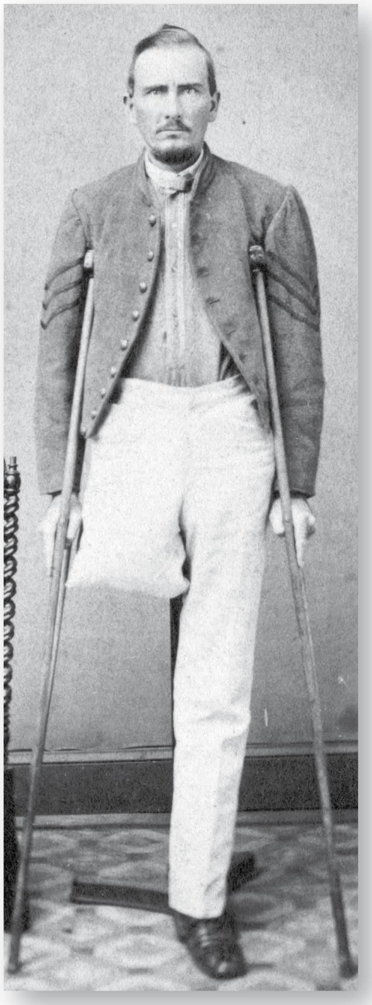
In other sectors, Meade’s skirmishers encountered little resistance. The soldiers from the 12th Corps discovered that Ewell’s corps had practically vanished from their front. Only rows of dead remained. Pvt. Henry Brown of the 28th Pennsylvania noted, “Oh what a sight! They lay in heaps, shot in all conceivable ways.” For the remainder of the day, the 12th Corps troops buried them. Grave-digging crews, fortified with whiskey to dull their sense of smell, callously tossed them into trench graves. The 111th Pennsylvania reported burying 108 corpses. The last body laid to rest was that of an orderly sergeant. After it was thrown into the ditch, one Pennsylvanian shouted, “There, damn you, call the roll, and see if they are all there!”

Union forces also occupied the borough without much trouble. Col. Włodzimierz Krzyżanowski’s brigade advanced from Cemetery Hill, entered the town via Baltimore Street, and then went door to door, rescuing wounded men and frightened civilians. Krzyżanowski’s men also discovered dozens of Confederate sharpshooters asleep at their posts; having failed to hear the order to retreat, they became prisoners. On its own, the 58th New York bagged 280 Confederates. The Yankees also discovered an errant brigade commander, Brig. Gen. Alexander Schimmelfennig, who had been missing since July 1. He had been hiding in a shed in the yard of Catherine Garlach. Schimmelfennig was exhausted and shaken, but otherwise unhurt. Another patrol recovered Brig. Gen. Francis Barlow, a badly wounded divisional commander who had been left behind during the Union retreat on the battle’s first day. Union soldiers found him under a heavy dose of morphine, still clinging to life, at the John S. Crawford house. The Union infantry also discovered Barlow’s wife, Arabella, taking care of him. A Union nurse, she had traveled through the lines on the evening of July 2 to seek out her husband.

This good news—the recovery of Schimmelfennig and Barlow and the Confederate evacuation from the borough—reached Meade by noon. Meade now knew that Ewell’s corps had abandoned its position, but he did not yet believe the Army of Northern Virginia was retreating. Instead, he supposed that Lee had merely “thrown back his left,” taking up a slightly altered defensive position. To determine his moves for July 5, Meade held a short council of war inside a private dwelling along the Baltimore Pike. Meade asked his corps commanders if the army should remain in position or if it should assume the offensive. After a short debate, four of the generals voted to remain in place. Three others wanted to move the army, either as an offensive move or as means of taking up a stronger defensive position. (The last corps commander—Howard—was undecided.) Once again, yielding to a decision by consensus, Meade decided to keep the army in place. At 10.00 p.m. he telegraphed Halleck, stating that, “no change of affairs” had occurred since noon. He also told Halleck that on July 5 he would send out another wave of reconnaissance missions to “ascertain what the intentions of the enemy is [*sic*].”

As Meade wondered about Lee’s next move, one of his cavalry units stumbled upon the southern wagon train. Just before midnight, Kilpatrick’s cavalry division encountered the tail end of Ewell’s trains as they traversed Monterey Pass, a narrow, wooded mountain gap eight miles southwest of Fairfield. Amid a driving thunderstorm and in utter darkness, Kilpatrick’s division charged into the rear of the column, where only thirty men under Capt. George M. Emack of the 1st Maryland (C.S.) Cavalry protected it. Brig. Gen. Grumble Jones was there as well. Jones had promised Emack that he would bring up reinforcements to prevent a disaster from occurring, but they had not arrived in time. Unable to counter the Union cavalry charge, Emack’s men scattered into the night, and in the chaotic struggle that followed, many of the Confederate wagons had to be surrendered or abandoned. Other wagons became lost when they fell into a deep ravine along the north side of the road. In the end, the Confederates lost 290 wagons and hundreds of men captured. Brig. Gen. Jones barely managed to escape. During the fight, he urged his soldiers to address him, not as “general,” but as “Bill,” to avoid drawing the attention of the Union troopers. Kilpatrick reported a loss of five killed, ten wounded, and twenty-eight missing.

Sadly, Kilpatrick’s success did not get reported to Meade. After routing the wagons, Kilpatrick drove his troopers over South Mountain and out of contact with the rest of the Army of the Potomac. Consequently, Meade did not learn of the Confederate retreat until early afternoon, July 5. In the morning, Brig. Gen. Horatio Wright’s 1st Division, 6th Corps, advanced westward over the Emmitsburg Road and all the way to Seminary Ridge. When Wright’s men reached the ridge, they found campfire pits and detritus, but no enemy soldiers. With the weather clearing, Union signalmen could now see the ends of the Confederate columns wending their way through the Cashtown and Fairfield Passes. At 12.30 p.m., Meade sent orders to Maj. Gen. Sedgwick to push the reconnaissance farther afield. Immediately, the 6th Corps took the road leading to Fairfield. Meanwhile, the other Union infantry corps packed up and headed south on the roads leading to Emmitsburg and Littlestown.



Sgt. Richard T. Gilbert of Company D, 18th Georgia, was wounded in the leg on July 2. Left behind during the retreat, he received an amputation at a field hospital, and was exchanged on November 12. (Library of Congress)

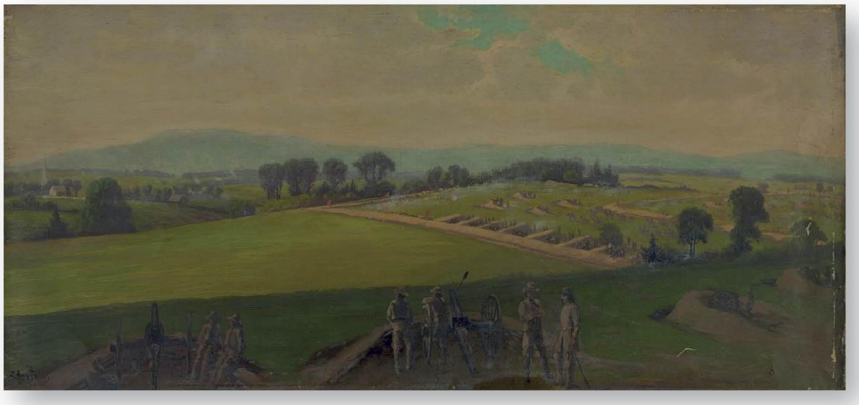
With a chase afoot, the Confederates pressed on to reach the Potomac and cross it. Imboden's brigade got there first. It reached Williamsport on the afternoon of July 5, but not until after some difficulty. Two squadrons of

Union cavalry stationed at McConnellsberg raided the ambulance train as it passed through Cunningham's Crossroads. Imboden's column lost 100 wagons, 300 animals, and 653 men taken prisoner. Once clear of the raiders, Imboden stationed the surviving wagons along the riverbank and his troopers dug in on the east side of Williamsport. Harman's wagons joined up sometime after midnight. Due to the recent rainfall, Imboden found it impossible to cross the river on foot or on horseback. Undeterred, his men took possession of flatboats at Lemen's Ferry and began floating the wagons across, one at a time, and putting them onto the Valley Turnpike on the West Virginia side of the river.

Imboden's brigade was in a tight spot. It had no infantry to protect the wagons and Union cavalry was closing in. Both Kilpatrick's and Buford's divisions got ahead of Lee's infantry. Leaving Monterey Pass, Kilpatrick turned his division south to Smithsburg, where it clashed with two of Stuart's brigades that were trying to head west through the same crossroads. After this brief collision, Kilpatrick headed south to Boonsboro, where he rendezvoused with Buford's division. Prior to dawn, July 6, both divisions mounted up and attacked the Confederates. Kilpatrick aimed for Hagerstown, where Stuart's brigades had gone to reassemble. Throughout the afternoon, Kilpatrick's men advanced through the city streets. Stuart's cavalry—which now numbered four brigades—held on doggedly, and late in the evening, the arrival of Lee's infantry from Leitersburg turned the tide in Stuart's favor.

Farther west, at Williamsport, Imboden's outnumbered command took on Buford's 3,500 troopers. Using his time wisely, Imboden put a defensive ring around the town, even dragooning some 700 wounded men into the ranks. As at Hagerstown, the Confederate cavalry held on for dear life, buying time for the vanguard of Lee's infantry to arrive. When the graycoats began filing behind Imboden's position after dark, Buford found it impossible to press the attack. At the end of their abortive advances, both Union cavalry divisions pulled back to Boonsboro. The Confederates had lost about 325 men in their defenses of Williamsport and Hagerstown. The Union troopers counted up 279 losses.

As reports from Buford and Kilpatrick reached him, Meade felt confident that Lee meant to cross the river at Williamsport. He sent orders to his corps commanders, instructing them to move their infantry over the mountains. By July 8, the bulk of the Army of the Potomac was advancing on two fronts, entering the towns of Sharpsburg and Boonsboro. On July 10, Union and Confederate infantry collided at a small village along Antietam Creek called Funkstown. Confederate forces, which included five of Stuart's cavalry brigades and three of Longstreet's infantry brigades, gave way and pulled back into a line of earthworks. By July 11, the bulk of the Army of Northern Virginia had assembled along a nine-mile stretch of ground between Downsville and Williamsport.

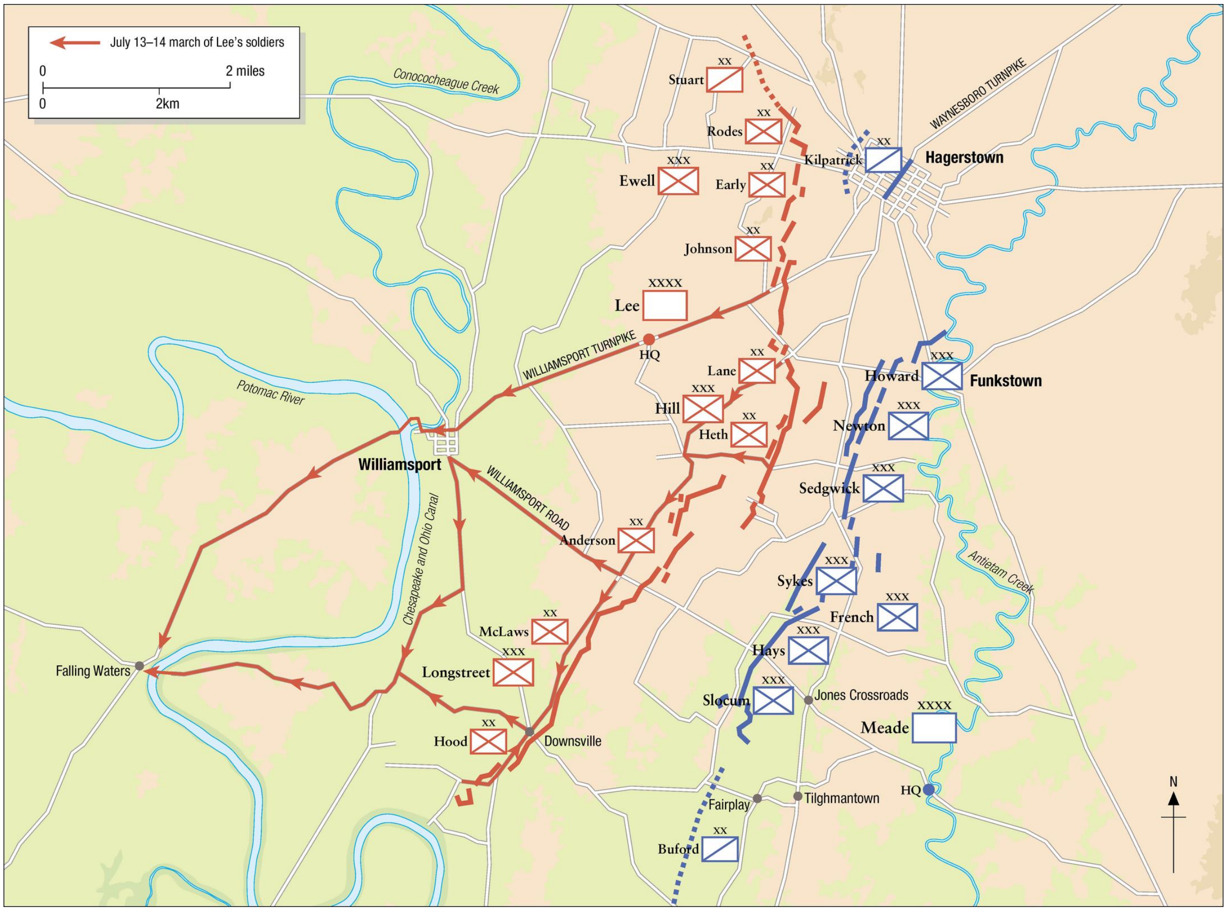


As soon as Lee's infantry and artillery reached a position along the Potomac River, they began digging in, fortifying their line. This illustration by Edwin Forbes shows the Confederate earthworks. The rebel entrenchments stretched between Williamsport to the north and Downsville to the south. (Library of Congress)

With this new line, Lee's army had access to two crossing points: the ferry at Williamsport and the ford at Falling Waters. Unfortunately, neither location could be used immediately. The height of the river prevented it. The army had to wait several days until the flood receded. Further, the engineers had to build new pontoons to replace the ones destroyed by Union cavalry on July 4. Over the course of two days, pioneer teams built sixteen new pontoons at Williamsport and floated them downriver to Falling Waters. Although tired and undermanned, Lee's infantry and artillery dug relentlessly, reinforcing their positions with earthworks. Uneasy about his predicament, Lee sent a message to his soldiers, read aloud to each regiment: "Soldiers, your old enemy is before you. Win from him honor worthy of your right cause, worthy of your comrades dead on so many illustrious fields." Lee believed the Army of the Potomac would attack as soon as it arrived.

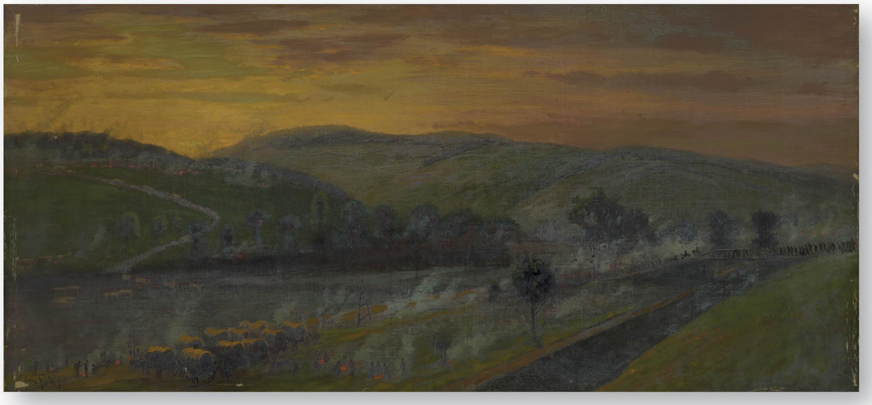
On July 12, Meade's army took up position directly opposite Lee's. Kilpatrick's cavalry retook Hagerstown—marking the Army of the Potomac's northern flank, while Buford's men took up the village of Bakersville, anchoring the army's southern flank. The infantry fanned out in between. The two lines stood about two miles apart at their narrowest point. Many Union soldiers believed their moment of glory had arrived. They predicted a major battle would occur within the next twenty-four hours, and further, that battle would determine the fate of the war in the East. A sergeant in the 12th Corps wrote home that evening, "we may become engaged at any moment. we are ready. [T]hey have the choice in position and it will be a terrible battle."

No doubt, the tension weighed heavily upon Meade who reconnoitered his front lines on the afternoon of the 12th. While at the front, he encountered a sanctimonious chaplain who urged him not to attack, since it was Sunday. Meade replied that he could not avoid conflict merely to placate the Christian Sabbath. As a general, he had a duty to destroy Lee's army. Using a parable, Meade explained, like a man who had been contracted to build a box, he had completed four sides and a bottom. All he needed to do was nail down the lid. Not appreciating the metaphor, the chaplain angrily gestured to the heavens, where a thunderstorm loomed. He declared, "Then, as God's agent, I solemnly protest and will show you that the Almighty will not permit this to be done. Look at the heavens, see the threatening storm approaching!" As if to punctuate the point, lightning struck and a heavy rain blanketed the countryside. Obstructed by the weather, Meade and his staff galloped for cover. At 4.30 p.m., he sent a telegraph to Halleck, declaring his intention to attack tomorrow, "unless something intervenes to prevent it."


July 13–14 march of Lee's soldiers
0
2 miles
0
2km
Conococheague Creek
XX
Stuart
XX
Rodes
XXX
Ewell
XX
Early
XX
Kilpatrick
Hagerstown
WAYNESBORO TURNPIKE
XX
Johnson
XXXX
Lee
HQ
WILLIAMSPORT TURNPIKE
XX
Lane
XXX
Howard
Funkstown
XXX
Hill
XX
Heth
XXX
Newton
Potomac River
Williamsport
WILLIAMSPORT ROAD
XXX
Sedgwick
XX
Anderson
Chesapeake and Ohio Canal
Antietam Creek
XXX
Sykes
XXX
French
XX
McLaws
XXX
Longstreet
XXX
Hays
Falling Waters
XXX
Slocum
Jones Crossroads
XXXX
Meade
XX
Hood
Downsville
HQ
Fairplay
Tilghmantown
XX
Buford
N

Williamsport and Falling Waters

Meade's promise did not last long. At 8.00 p.m., he assembled his corps commanders inside his headquarters tent at Booth's Mill Bridge. The attendees included Hays, Sykes, Sedgwick, Howard, Slocum, and Pleasonton. Brig. Gen. James Wadsworth stood in for Newton, who was too ill to attend and Maj. Gen. William French attended as well, having become the new commander of the 3rd Corps. Meade told his assemblage that he wished to order a reconnaissance-in-force. This announcement prompted heated discussion. Several of the corps commanders considered it unwise to attack. Apparently swayed by these concerns, Meade put the issue to a vote. Five of them—Hays, French, Sykes, Sedgwick, and Slocum—voted against an immediate assault. With that, Meade yielded to their sentiments, and he abstained from ordering an advance.

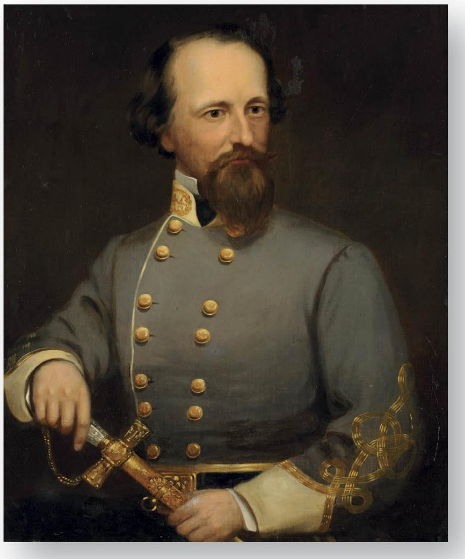


This painting by Edwin Forbes depicts Confederate forces fleeing across the Potomac on the morning of July 14. The pontoon bridge at Falling Waters appears at lower left, just above the parked wagons. The C. & O. Canal (and towpath) runs through the lower right of the image (note the Confederate troops passing over the footbridge above the canal). The road through Falling Waters, West Virginia, can be see winding through the hills on the left. (Library of Congress)

Currently, debate exists concerning Meade's true intentions. Although Meade later testified before Congress that he was "in favor of moving forward and attacking the enemy and taking the consequences," one of those present at the July 12 meeting—Slocum—insisted that Meade did not want to attack. A few months later, Slocum wrote to Judge Lewis Morgan, saying that Meade had called the vote in such a way as to lead the corps commanders to that particular conclusion. According to Slocum, Meade had said, "Shall we, without further knowledge of the position of the enemy, make an attack?" Slocum believed this "indicated the decision the commanding general anticipated."

Whatever Meade's intentions, he did not issue attack orders for July 13. This gave Lee's men a twenty-four-hour window to slip across the river. At dawn, July 13, Lee's army made its break. Despite constant rain, the river level had finally sunk to about four feet, which enabled the infantry to cross at Williamsport. Also, Lee's engineers had managed to construct a single pontoon bridge at Falling Waters, which allowed the ambulance trains to cross in safety. Ewell's corps and Stuart's cavalry forded the river at Williamsport. The wagon trains followed the C. & O. towpath to the Maryland side of Falling Waters, and once there, they crossed on the bridge. Longstreet's and Hill's corps followed the wagons. All the while, rain fell in torrents. Lee's soldiers slipped in mud and those fording the river were knocked over by the current. By dawn on July 14, only five of Hill's infantry brigades remained on the Maryland side. They had relinquished their earthworks and were backed into the narrow neck where the Potomac made a hairpin turn.

As daylight waned, Meade ordered for a four-division reconnaissance-in-force to begin at 7.00 a.m. the next day, July 14. Kilpatrick's cavalry were the first to spring forward. Finally taken off their leash, the troopers of the 5th Michigan Cavalry galloped into Williamsport. There, they discovered stragglers who told them about the Falling Waters crossing. Ever impulsive, Kilpatrick ordered a squadron from the 6th Michigan under Maj. Peter Weber to make haste and disrupt it. Weber's men reached the Confederate rearguard at 11.30 a.m. Seeing plenty of infantry in his way, Weber's brigade commander, Custer, ordered him to dismount. But soon, Kilpatrick arrived, and true to form, countermanded Custer, ordering Weber to remain mounted and charge. Weber raised his sword and exhorted his men: "Wheel into line and damn them, split their heads open!"



At Falling Waters, Brig. Gen. James Johnston Pettigrew commanded a brigade in Heth's division. While trooping the line near the Donnelly barn, he received a fatal gunshot wound through the abdomen fired from a pistol wielded by a dismounted corporal belonging to the 6th Michigan Cavalry. Although dangerously wounded, Pettigrew refused to be left behind. He insisted his staff carry him to safety. They did, but Pettigrew died of his wounds three days later at Bunker Hill, West Virginia. (North Carolina Museum of History)

Swinging sabers wildly, Weber's troopers crashed through the Confederate line, which consisted of elements from Maj. Gen. Henry Heth's division. Maj. Weber fell dead, as did forty of his command. Eighty-five others received non-fatal wounds. When it became clear that a mounted attack would not dislodge the enemy, Custer sent in two more regiments in dismounted formation. This finally broke Heth's line. The Confederate infantry lost hundreds killed and wounded and at least 500 were captured. Brig. Gen. Pettigrew lay among the dead, having been shot through the abdomen near the Daniel Donnelly barn. The Confederates probably lost as many as 2,000 men, for that was what Kilpatrick reported, although most of these were stragglers gobbled up along the road leading to Falling Waters. Although Weber's forlorn assault took a big bite out of Heth's division, it did not stop the crossing. The remaining Confederate infantry made it over to the West Virginia side without further incident. They cut the cables to the pontoon bridges, stacked up the boats, and disappeared from the bank.

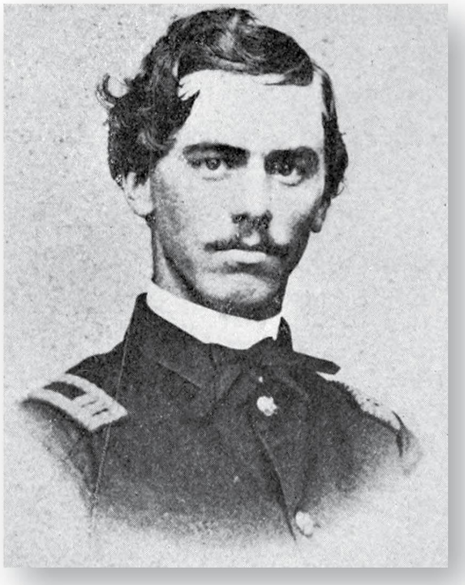
By 11.00 a.m., even as Weber was about to make his attack, Meade realized that Lee had slipped his grasp. Although he had yet to learn about the outcome of Kilpatrick's reconnaissance, the four infantry divisions he had ordered into action reached the Confederate line and discovered only abandoned entrenchments. Writing to Halleck, Meade admitted, perfunctorily, "I found, on reaching his lines, that they were evacuated."

Disappointment spread through the Army of the Potomac. Although some soldiers breathed a sigh of relief when no major battle occurred, many others believed their commander had wasted a golden opportunity.

From his position at the Executive Mansion, Abraham Lincoln learned the disappointing news. In haste, he scratched a message to Meade in which he expressed his "deep distress" at learning of the escape of Lee's army. Lincoln wrote:

> [M]y dear general, I do not believe you appreciate the magnitude of the misfortune involved in Lee's escape. He was within your easy grasp, and to have closed upon him would, in connection with our other late successes, have ended the war. As it is, the war will be prolonged indefinitely… Your golden opportunity is gone, and I am distressed immeasureably [*sic*] because of it.

Although Lincoln endorsed the envelope, he never signed the letter, nor did he send it. Meade—and the nation, for that matter—never saw Lincoln's criticism, not until the twentieth century, when the Lincoln papers finally became a matter of public record. Reluctant to criticize a general who had been victorious under unfavorable circumstances, Lincoln had second thoughts about dispatching his angry missive. After sleeping on it, it remained unsent.



Maj. Peter Weber commanded the ill-fated mounted attack against Heth's rearguard at Falling Waters. Weber's two companies successfully breached enemy lines, ruffling Heth's men, but the rout did not occur until Brig. Gen. Custer deployed two more regiments in dismounted formation. Weber was killed while leading the charge. A fellow officer remembered him as "a rare and natural soldier, the embodiment of courage." (Library of Congress)

Lincoln's criticisms were undeniable. Meade had, indeed, missed a golden opportunity. But the game wasn't over. He still had one more chance to catch Lee.

WAPPING HEIGHTS

Even though Lee's army had slipped across the Potomac, Meade was not about to give up. Soon after learning that all of the graycoats had left Maryland, he issued orders to continue the pursuit. He planned to cross the river thirty-five miles below Lee's escape path and enter the Loudoun Valley on the east side of the Blue Ridge Mountains. If he could do this—and do it quickly—he might be able to push south, cross the mountain gaps, and interpose a large section of his army between the Army of Northern Virginia and the railroad lines that connected the Shenandoah Valley to Richmond. If the Army of the Potomac concentrated at Winchester, the Army of Northern Virginia would have its back against the river. Only this time, there would be no hope of escape.

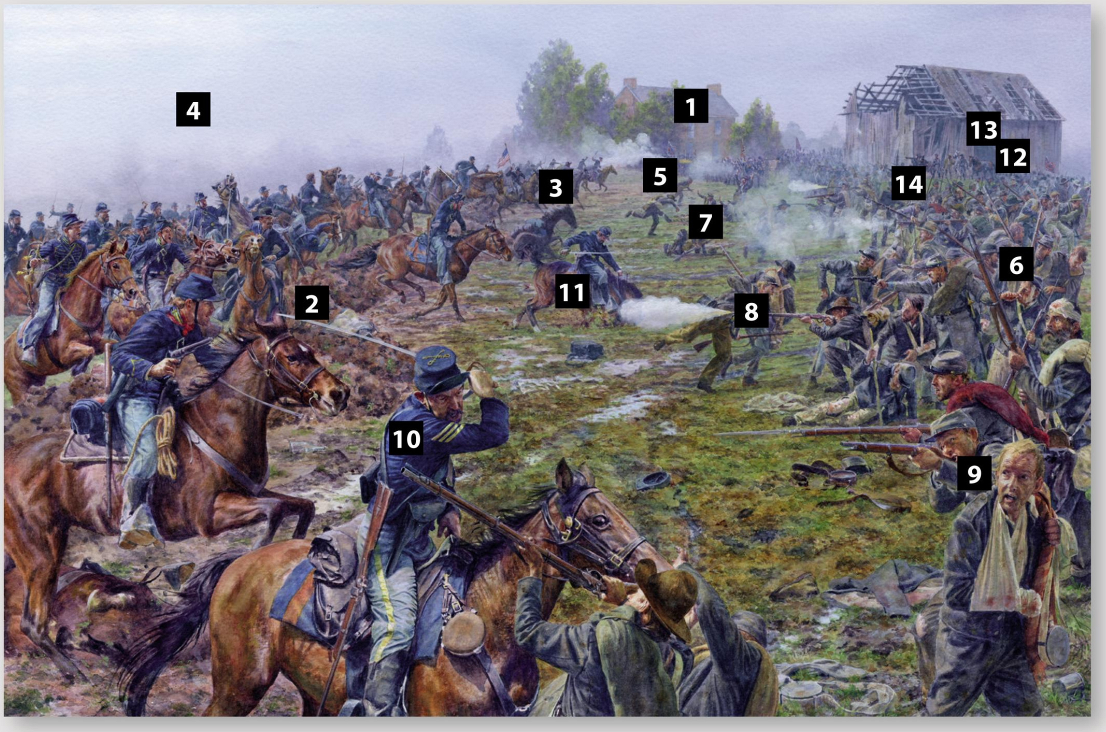
At daylight, July 15, Meade's soldiers marched to Sandy Hook and Berlin. From those locations, the Yankees returned to Virginia. It was a warm, sultry march. All along the way, hundreds of fatigued men dropped by the roadside. A New Hampshire sergeant in the 3rd Corps remembered, "No time was given … to eat, drink, or rest. With no breakfast to start on, and no halt for dinner, on, on, [we] push, [our] weary way… [We] were being treated more like 'dumb, driven cattle' than human beings."

Within two days, this stifling heat had taken its toll. Cases of heat exhaustion prevailed among the Union infantry. When it appeared that fatigue might ruin Meade's pursuit, the army's Medical Department issued a circular that allowed regimental commanders to issue foraging orders to collect medicinal fruit, specifically Virginia blackberries. The blackberrying curtailed the heat exhaustion, but it led to unintended straggling. By July 19, hungry or lazy men gathered in droves along the sides of the roads, swallowing berries by the handful, ignoring their officers' entreaties to keep moving. When several brigade commanders issued orders to limit the berry-picking, it only led to derisive jeers from the men.

While Meade's soldiers trudged through the summer heat, their Confederate adversaries enjoyed several days of recuperation. As per a circular issued by Lee on July 14, the Army of Northern Virginia gained much-needed rest at the villages of Bunker Hill, Darkesville, and Leetown. Lee's army also received some reinforcement. On July 15, a fresh brigade, Brig. Gen. Montgomery Corse's, reached Winchester. Corse's brigade, which had spent the last month guarding Hanover Junction, brought with it about 2,400 officers and men. It was an infusion of fresh troops that Lee's army sorely needed.

Only Stuart's cavalry kept busy. On July 15 and 16, three brigades fought off a Union cavalry probe at Shepherdstown, inflicting 104 losses upon the enemy. Pleased with Stuart's success, Lee ordered his horsemen to secure Ashby's and Snicker's Gaps. As Lee later reported, when he felt confident in his army's ability to move, he intended to march through one or both of those gaps and put it into the Loudoun Valley. However, the brigade tasked with securing the gaps—the one commanded by Grumble Jones—failed to reach these positions. Brig. Gen. Judson Kilpatrick's division beat Jones to the prizes, occupying the gaps on July 18 and 21.

When news of the Union occupation of Snicker's Gap reached him at Bunker Hill, Lee expressed mild concern, because, if the Union army took both gaps, he wrote, "This may oblige us to move up the Valley." On July 19, after four days of rest, Lee instructed Longstreet to secure Ashby's Gap. Importantly, he also sent orders directing his engineers—who were conducting a pontoon train sent from Richmond—to begin construction of bridges over the Shenandoah River at Front Royal. Not wanting to be trapped on the wrong side of a river again, Lee told Longstreet to send an officer to ensure its completion.



FALLING WATERS

At 11.20 a.m., July 14, the vanguard of Brig. Gen. Hugh Judson Kilpatrick's 3rd Division, Cavalry Corps, caught up with the Confederate rearguard—Maj. Gen. Henry Heth's division—at the Daniel Donnelly farm (**1**). This farm sat on a ridge 1.8 miles from the pontoon bridge the Army of Northern Virginia used to escape into Falling Waters, West Virginia.

Heth’s division was a shadow of its former self. Three days of fighting at Gettysburg had cost it over 3,300 men killed, wounded, or captured. Eleven days of retreating had sapped the energy and good humor from the survivors. The division had marched all night, eight miles, from a line of earthworks outside Williamsport. Although Heth ordered his men into line, most of them, worn out, stacked their arms. Others straggled to the Potomac’s riverbank to await their turn to cross. Still others occupied a line of abandoned artillery lunettes (**2**), but no guns presently deployed in the area.

When Union cavalry arrived on the scene, their brigade commander, Brig. Gen. George A. Custer, ordered the leading squadron (Companies B and F, 6th Michigan Cavalry) to dismount, deploy as skirmishers, and engage the enemy atop Donnelly’s Ridge. No sooner had the Michigan cavalrymen complied, when Kilpatrick arrived and countermanded Custer’s order. Unwilling to let the enemy slip away without a fight, Kilpatrick ordered the lead squadron to mount, draw sabers, and charge. The squadron commander, twenty-two-year-old Maj. Peter Weber (**3**), told his troopers: “Wheel into line and damn them, split their heads open!”

Sgt. James H. Kidd, who belonged to one of the 6th Michigan’s trailing companies, recalled the scene:

> Weber, knowing no law for a soldier except implicit obedience to orders, first saw his men well closed up, then placed himself at their head and giving the order “Forward,” emerged from the woods into the open field, took the trot until near the top of the slope, close to the earthworks, and then with a shout the little band of less than a hundred men charged right into the midst of ten times their number of veteran troops. The first onset surprised and astonished the enemy, who had mistaken Weber’s force for a squadron of their own cavalry. The audacity of the thing dazed them for a minute, and for a minute only.

With sabers raised, the Michigan cavalrymen galloped a half-mile up the ridge. At first, the Confederates did not realize they were under attack. Heavy mist (**4**) obscured the field and many believed the horsemen were friendly. Further, they assumed a squadron of enemy cavalry would never make a mounted attack against an entire division of infantry. But as sporadic firing opened up along the Confederate line, the officers realized their error and began arousing their men from their repose.

The haggard men of Col. John M. Brockenbrough’s (**5**) and Brig. Gen. Johnston Pettigrew’s brigades (**6**) hastily formed ranks in time to deliver one volley against the onrushing Union cavalry before the Union horses began leaping the lunettes.

A scene of wild confusion erupted. Confederate forces elicited a mixed reaction of panic and poise. Some rebels threw down their rifles and surrendered (**7**). Others fled to the river (**8**). Still others defiantly defended their position (**9**).

Weber’s squadron experienced the thrill of victory, but only at first. The Michigan troopers crashed through Heth’s line of battle, cutting down the rebels with their sabers (**10**). But as they broke into the field near the Donnelly house and barn, the thick crowds of Confederate soldiers made it impossible for the Yankee cavalry to keep up their momentum. In a few minutes, thirty-three Michigan cavalry were killed and another fifty-six wounded. This number included Maj. Weber, who fell shot through the head. It also included Weber’s two company commanders, 1st Lieut. Charles E. Bolza (**11**) and 1st Lieut. George W. Crawford. The former was killed and the latter had his leg shattered.

The Confederates, too, lost one of their leaders. When the fighting started, Brig. Gen. Pettigrew’s horse, Zaida (**12**), bucked him, tossing him to the ground. As his staff officers and his enslaved servant (**13**) corralled his frantic mount, Pettigrew (**14**) hobbled over to the Donnelly barn to direct the action. In the midst of the melee, a Union corporal happened upon Pettigrew, aimed his revolver, and fired, hitting him in the abdomen. Pettigrew's staff managed to carry him to safety, but he died of his wound on the morning of July 16 in the home of John Boyd on the Valley Turnpike.

As the survivors of Weber's squadron retreated, the rest of the 6th Michigan came to its rescue. The other companies fought dismounted, drawing attention in their direction. The 1st Michigan and a squadron from the 8th New York also joined the fray, and the fighting sputtered out around 1.00 p.m. By then, casualties in the Michigan regiment climbed to forty killed and eighty-five wounded.

Although Kilpatrick later boasted how he had driven the enemy from the field, in reality, Heth's division simply carried out its orders to retire across the Potomac. In his suspect report, Kilpatrick claimed that his troopers counted 125 enemy dead and fifty wounded left on the field. Perhaps these numbers are an exaggeration, but Kilpatrick's assault did, in fact, capture three enemy battle flags and one regimental commander. Thus, Weber's forlorn attack helped take a bite out of the retreating foe, but nothing could hide the fact that the Army of Northern Virginia had escaped. Looking back on the engagement in later years, Sgt. Kidd remembered the Battle of Falling Waters by commenting, "No more brilliant passage at arms took place during the war for the union, and it is a pity that some more able historian could not have written the story and immortalized the men, both dead and living who had a part in it."

The next day, Longstreet's infantry reached Millwood, and found that Ashby's Gap was indeed blocked by Union troops. Hastily, Longstreet sent a message back to Lee, telling him that he must bring up the rest of the army. If the Union soldiers came through the two southern gaps—Manassas Gap and Chester Gap—the Army of Northern Virginia would be bottled up in the Valley. From there, the news only got worse. On July 21, when Longstreet's men finally entered Front Royal, they discovered the Shenandoah River was too high to ford, and disappointingly, the engineers had not begun construction of the pontoon bridge. Prudently, Longstreet ordered one brigade, Corse's, to cross the river by using the boats. After getting to the south bank, Corse's men took possession of the gaps, but for two days, they were all alone.

On the afternoon of the 21st, Lee received notification from Longstreet that Ashby's Gap was blocked. Without delay, he ordered Hill's corps to march to Front Royal via Winchester, but unfortunately, Ewell's corps was two days behind. Unwisely, Lee had moved Ewell's men in the wrong direction—to Martinsburg to strike the B. & O. Railroad. (Lee had issued orders to Ewell before the news from Longstreet had reached him.) Although the raid successfully damaged the rail line, Ewell's men were now far from the escape hatch. Altogether, Lee's army was strung out across thirty-five miles, thin and vulnerable.

That same day, Union cavalry made contact with Longstreet’s men. Two skirmishes erupted as Corse’s Virginians fought off Union cavalry belonging to Buford’s division. But even in defeat, Buford’s attack offered Meade helpful information. He now possessed an accurate picture of the situation. He knew that a large portion of the Confederate army would be passing through Front Royal on the 23rd. If he pushed his own infantry through Manassas Gap and took the town—which was the only place the Confederate army could cross the Shenandoah River—Meade could split the Army of Northern Virginia in two, trapping two Confederate corps inside the Valley. That evening, Meade sent orders to his nearest infantry—the 3rd and 5th Corps—ordering them to press westward, penetrate the gap, and seize Front Royal.

On July 22, the situation in Lee’s army brightened slightly. Longstreet’s engineers completed the pontoon bridges. In an unhurried, day-long operation, Longstreet’s corps passed through Chester Gap and brushed aside Buford’s cavalry at the foot of the heights. Hill’s corps planned to follow the next day, but it became doubtful that it could move without trouble. That day, Corse’s men reported Union troops entering the east side of Manassas Gap at Linden Station. If the Yankees broke through, Hill’s men would be stuck in Front Royal and Ewell’s men would be trapped on the north side of the Shenandoah.

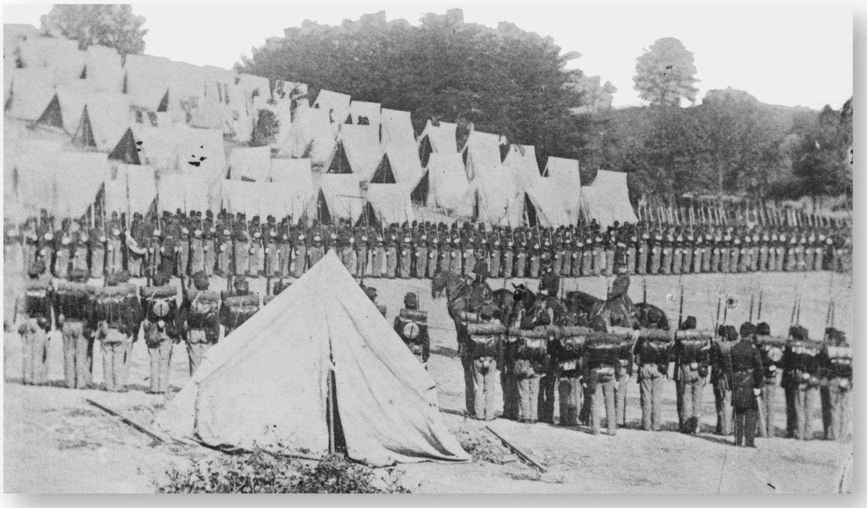
When the last flecks of daylight faded on July 22, Hill assigned one brigade to the crucial task of holding shut the western side of Manassas Gap, the brigade commanded by Col. Edward J. Walker, 700 strong. (Normally, Brig. Gen. Ambrose Wright commanded this brigade, but his division commander, Maj. Gen. Anderson, had relieved him of duty that very morning.) Walker’s Georgians faced a daunting task. They had to hold long enough for Hill’s and Ewell’s corps to escape. About 13,400 soldiers from the Union 3rd Corps were set to attack them the next day, meaning that Walker’s men were outnumbered nineteen to one. (The 3rd Corps was much larger than normal. A new division, Brig. Gen. Washington Elliott’s, joined it on July 8.)

The Georgians enjoyed only one advantage: suitable terrain. Manassas Gap’s western aperture formed a veritable Thermopylae. A steep, 1,300-foot-high hill called Green Hill shielded the gap’s northwestern edge, and Wapping Heights—an enormous paw-shaped hill some 2,000 feet high—filled the gap’s southern boundary. Steep, craggy sides and thick pine trees dotted the landscape. A Union soldier in the 3rd Corps later described the inside of the gap this way: “The surface of the ground was covered with loose stones, some of large size, above and around which the rank grass had grown, making the movement of artillery, and the manoevring [*sic*] of large bodies of men … rougher than anything the Army of the Potomac had ever before experienced in all of its marches and travels.”

At 10.00 a.m., July 23, the 3rd Corps beat the call to “fall in.” Despite his incredible numerical advantage, the corps commander, Maj. Gen. William French, exhibited caution, a surprise given that he—more than anyone—understood the pivotal nature of contest. Earlier that morning, French’s inspector general, Lieut. Col. Julius Hayden, returned from Green Hill with an accurate report concerning the Confederate position. According to Thomas M. Cook, a newspaper correspondent attached to corps headquarters, Hayden could see Ewell’s wagon trains making haste for the pontoon bridge. French discussed the matter with his divisional commanders and headquarters staff. All agreed that a tremendous opportunity presented itself. Cook, who was present, wrote:

> [I]t seemed clear that this [body of troops] must be a portion—perhaps the advance—of the rebels’ Second corps. Their first corps had already passed down the valley… The situation was eminently favorable. This was precisely the time to attack. We could now cut the rebel column in two. This was the natural and common supposition, and there was no dissent from it.

Although the staff urged an assault, French wanted to test Confederate defenses with his skirmishers. He told his leading divisional commander, Brig. Gen. Hobart Ward, to deploy six of his thirteen regiments in skirmish formation. At 11.00 a.m., Ward’s division inched forward with Brig. Gen. Henry Prince’s division close behind. The skirmishing lasted two hours. Shortly after noon, Ward resolved to dislodge one troublesome enemy regiment, the 3rd Georgia, from its position atop the western crest of Wapping Heights. Two of Ward’s regiments, the 3rd and 4th Maine, made the assault. At the summit, the Maine regiments delivered a well-aimed volley, striking down the Georgian brigade commander, Col. Walker, and routing his men. The two Maine regiments lost only four men wounded.



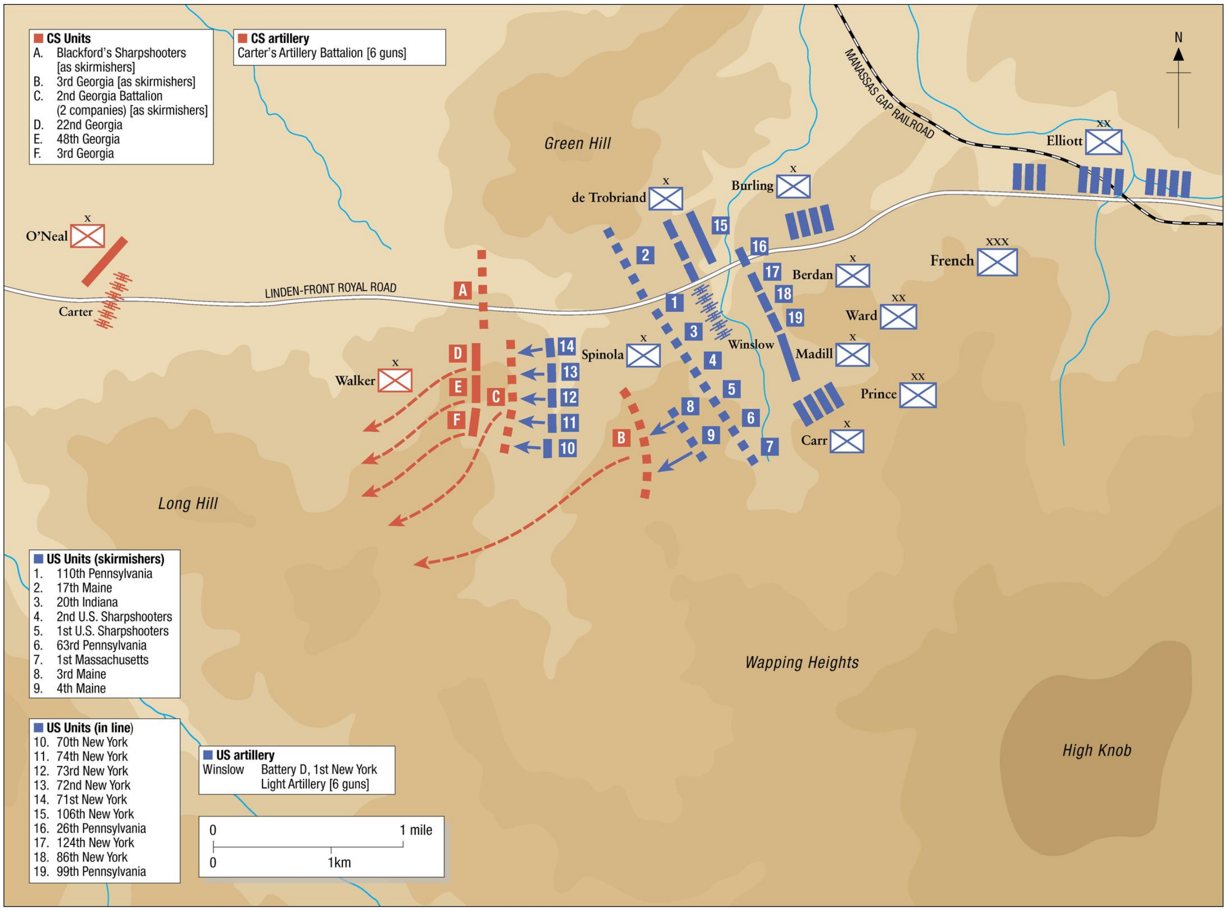
This image depicts the review of a regiment belonging to the Excelsior Brigade (likely the 70th New York). In a stunning frontal attack, the Excelsior Brigade carried Wapping Heights, routing the Georgia regiments that defended it. A witness recalled, “Like demons they charged upon the bewildered foe, each man catching his prisoner by the hair, an arm of perhaps a coattail, with the usual exclamation, ‘Here you damned son of a b—h, you’re my prisoner!’” (Library of Congress)

Still, Maj. Gen. French responded to this success with undue caution. He wasted another four hours assembling his regiments atop the heights and surveying the Confederate position. At 4.30 p.m., three of his brigades occupied the heights, while three others occupied the roadway that ran through the gap. French could see that the Georgians had reassembled atop a V-shaped hill called Long Hill. Further, they had strengthened their numbers. The remnant of the 3rd Georgia joined the other regiments from its brigade. Now, six hours after his staff had urged him to attack, French finally resolved “to send a brigade to penetrate the ravine in front and cut the enemy’s line.”

For this assignment, he selected Brig. Gen. Francis Spinola’s Excelsior Brigade, a unit of five New York regiments, about 880 strong. At 5.00 p.m., the Excelsiors unleashed their battle cry, the “Tiger Cheer,” and surged forward. Walker’s brigade—now under the command of Capt. Charles Andrews—fired one volley that wounded several Yankees, including Spinola. Fearlessly, the Excelsiors collided with the Confederates and, for a few furious minutes, the two sides grappled hand to hand. Unable to stand the shock of the charge, the Confederates fled in disorder. Pvt. James Dean of the 3rd Excelsior wrote home, “I know that some of them [Confederates] was wounded with the bayonets of our men[.] I do not want to brag but I gave one of them an inch of steel myself. You ought to see them rebs throw away their guns and belts. I never was so tired in my life as I was on that charge.”

Kicked off their perch, the Georgians fled west, down the opposite side of Long Hill and then up its western leg. Atop this slightly higher crest, Capt. Andrews rallied his men for another stand, gaining about sixty additional soldiers from Col. Edward O’Neal’s brigade, the vanguard of Ewell’s corps. Meanwhile, Col. John Egbert Farnum assumed command of the Excelsior Brigade and he ordered the charge to continue. Another great rush occurred, down the first slope and up the second. Andrews’s beleaguered line broke once again, leaving the exuberant Unionists as masters of the field. Altogether, the Excelsior Brigade lost seventy-five officers and men, including twenty-three killed or mortally wounded. The total loss on the federal side for the whole day stood at 106 killed and wounded. Confederate casualties were slightly heavier: 183 killed, wounded, and missing.

Meade did not witness the Battle of Wapping Heights. He had erected his headquarters at Linden, monitoring the fight from three miles away. When the 3rd Corps began its advance, he did not believe the Georgia brigade would pose much of an obstacle, assuming that French would have the gap under control by noon. But by evening, Meade became impatient. At 5.45 p.m., to determine the cause of the delay, he sent Brig. Gen. Warren to a signal station to observe the action. Warren arrived just as the Excelsiors finished their attack. He sent the following message to Meade: “General French’s skirmishers only have been engaged… General French’s troops are not advancing.”



CS Units
A. Blackford's Sharpshooters [as skirmishers]
B. 3rd Georgia [as skirmishers]
C. 2nd Georgia Battalion (2 companies) [as skirmishers]
D. 22nd Georgia
E. 48th Georgia
F. 3rd Georgia
CS artillery
Carter's Artillery Battalion [6 guns]
N
MANASSAS GAP RAILROAD
Elliott
XX
Green Hill
Burling
X
de Trobriand
X
O'Neal
X
LINDEN-FRONT ROYAL ROAD
Carter
French
XXX
Berdan
X
Ward
XX
Winslow
Spinola
X
Madill
X
Walker
X
Prince
XX
Carr
X
A
B
C
D
E
F
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
Long Hill
Wapping Heights
High Knob
US Units (skirmishers)
1. 110th Pennsylvania
2. 17th Maine
3. 20th Indiana
4. 2nd U.S. Sharpshooters
5. 1st U.S. Sharpshooters
6. 63rd Pennsylvania
7. 1st Massachusetts
8. 3rd Maine
9. 4th Maine
US Units (in line)
10. 70th New York
11. 74th New York
12. 73rd New York
13. 72nd New York
14. 71st New York
15. 106th New York
16. 26th Pennsylvania
17. 124th New York
18. 86th New York
19. 99th Pennsylvania
US artillery
Winslow Battery D, 1st New York Light Artillery [6 guns]
0
1 mile
0
1km

Wapping Heights

After the wounding of Spinola, command of the Excelsior Brigade fell to Col. John Egbert Farnum. Prior to the war, Farnum had attempted to profit from the institution of slavery. In 1851, he participated in Narciso Lopez's filibustering expedition to Cuba. Then, in 1858, as part of the New York Yacht Club, he illegally transported 409 enslaved Africans to Jekyll Island, Georgia, one of the last transatlantic slave voyages in world history. In 1861, after escaping prosecution, he turned over a new leaf, joining the Union army. At Wapping Heights, he led the charge of the Excelsior Brigade to its climax. He received a wound to the foot, but refused to relinquish command. (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution)

Undoubtedly, this news frustrated Meade. He had two fresh corps on hand. These units could have delivered a crushing blow, but only if the 3rd Corps had cleared the gap. French's hesitant advance had bottled up the army's reserves.

When night finally fell, French's divisional commanders—Ward, Prince, and Elliott—ordered their men to cease pursuit, which offered relief for the desperate Confederates. Hill's corps—minus Andrews's brigade—continued its march to Culpeper, reaching there on July 25. Meanwhile, Ewell drafted orders moving two of his divisions through Front Royal overnight with instructions to dismantle the bridges when the crossing had finished. In the predawn hours, these two divisions moved out along the Page Valley Road, heading in the direction of Luray.

Ewell gave up hope that his trailing division—Jubal Early's—could join in the escape. Even after dark, it was too far away to make it to the bridge. But luckily for Early and his men, no more Union harassment occurred. French's failure to take Front Royal allowed all three of Ewell's divisions to stumble southward to Luray as planned. William Judkins, one of the survivors of Andrews's brigade, remembered, "[T]he men staid close together all night, for we did not know but what the yanks were following us." By dawn, the tired column was eighteen miles from its Union pursuers. Maj. Gen. Robert Rodes noted that this movement occurred "on one of the hottest of summer days, [with] the excitement of the threatened battle" looming. Altogether, Rodes wrote, the physical and emotional stress "damaged the division seriously."

Over the next week, Meade redirected his pursuit to the Rappahannock River, but the cautious Union attack at Wapping Heights had ended any chance of keeping Lee's army trapped in the Shenandoah Valley. Months later, during his testimony before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War, Meade regretted the circumstances that allowed Lee's escape. He contended that he had made "every disposition" for a battle on July 24, which he "believed or hoped would take place," but when dawn broke, he found that Lee's men had, by night march, fled the scene.

Meade never accepted blame for the army's failure to attack at Wapping Heights. Undoubtedly, several events conspired against him. The awful heat and the blackberry order had slowed his army's march through the Loudoun Valley. Also, French—the man tasked with penetrating the pivotal gap and taking possession of the river crossing at Front Royal—had failed to complete the mission assigned to him. French possessed accurate intelligence that correctly depicted the Confederate position, but the small Confederate force deployed atop Wapping Heights flummoxed him. One 3rd Corps officer, Col. Régis de Trobriand, noticed how the other generals began gossiping about French's ineptitude immediately after the battle.

French's critics believed he had relied too heavily upon his skirmishers, which frittered away crucial hours with unproductive combat. Had French allowed all of his troops to do what the Excelsior Brigade had done, the battle might have gone differently. On July 25, de Trobriand discussed the battle with French. As de Trobriand recollected:

Maj. Gen. William Henry French served as commander of the 3rd Corps from July 8 to March 24, 1864. Another officer described him as “a large man with a red nose, a flushed face, a bald forehead, and a dull look.” French’s time as corps commander resulted in a string of disappointments, starting with the Battle of Wapping Heights. After that engagement, many Union officers gossiped that French’s undue caution had allowed Lee’s army to escape an elaborate trap set by Meade. When the Army of the Potomac downsized its corps in 1864, French lost his command. (NARA)

> He launched into a confused dissertation on the fine things he had accomplished on this occasion. His great argument consisted in this: that, except one brigade, he had used nothing but skirmishers to sweep the pass, and that, by keeping his troops back, he had prevented the enemy from knowing where they were. He returned continually to this point, and interrupted himself at each instant to say to me, “Do you see the point? Do you understand the point?” What I understood very clearly was that his ideas were very much confused. He did not appear to suspect that his system of skirmishers was just the unskilfulness which, by causing us to lose precious time, prevented our cutting in two the long column of Lee, or, at least, of cutting off his rearguard. He kept me for a long time in order to go over the same things, and, as I put my foot in the stirrup at the entrance to his tent, he kept repeating, “You understand the point, do you not?”

Col. de Trobriand’s point, that a decisive victory could have been achieved on July 23, bears emphasizing. “Nothing was easier,” he wrote years later. All the men of the 3rd Corps needed to do was “throw themselves rapidly on the enemy, sweep away the few troops found there [in the gap], and cut his [Lee’s] column in two.”

Lee’s army slipped from the Union’s grasp for the second time in ten days, getting clear of a troublesome geographic feature that imperiled its safety. Whoever was really to blame, the Battle of Wapping Heights ensured that the war in the east would go on.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE CAMPAIGN

Contrary to what some historians have concluded, the Gettysburg Campaign was not the “turning point” of the war. Although damaged, both armies kept fighting for another twenty-one months. With a U.S. presidential election looming in 1864, the Confederacy stood a solid chance of achieving independence if it caused sufficient turmoil to upset Lincoln’s reelection. Gettysburg had offered the Confederacy an opportunity to shift ahead that timetable, but only if the results of the battle somehow convinced Pennsylvanians to turn against Lincoln. But Lee’s retreat quashed any such hopes.

At first, Lee did not admit failure. On July 15, while writing to his family, he claimed victory, as he put it, by “relieving the Valley of the presence of the enemy & drawing his army north of the Potomac.” From this myopic point of view, Lee asserted that, once the enemy had followed him north of the Mason–Dixon Line, his campaign had achieved its goals. Scrupulously omitting any mention of the failed attacks on July 3, Lee wrote, “[H]aving accomplished what I purposed… I determined to recross the … river.”

But in time, Lee felt the sting of failure. Several southern newspapers—those already critical of the Davis administration—complained that Lee’s actions had worsened the Confederacy’s strategic situation. If 20,000 or 30,000 of Lee’s troops had been dispatched to relieve the garrison at Vicksburg, they said, then the Confederacy might have emerged from the summer in a stronger position. But with the Mississippi River now in Union hands, the Confederate government had to all but write off the trans-Mississippi states. That Lee had been beaten at Gettysburg only doubled the Confederacy’s dilemma. On July 30, the Charleston *Mercury* concluded, “It is impossible for an invasion to have been more foolish and disastrous. It was opportune neither in time nor circumstance.” Lee learned of these ill-feelings because President Davis attached these articles in his correspondence. Guessing that Davis agreed in part with the newspapers’ criticism, Lee changed his mind about the battle. Now, he accepted full responsibility for the defeat, telling Davis that no blame should be heaped upon his army. He explained, “I alone am to blame, perhaps in expecting too much of its prowess & valour.”

To soothe Lee’s feelings, Davis sent no more critical newspaper articles, but a week’s reflection only worsened Lee’s confidence. In another letter to Davis, Lee lamented the “expression of discontent in the public journals” and supposed that a similar level of dissatisfaction must exist within the ranks. Knowing this, Lee advised Davis to select a replacement to relieve him from his duties as army commander. Davis wrote back, refusing to accept Lee’s resignation. He advised Lee to ignore venal commentary and not view it as the sentiment of the army. With sincerity, Davis wrote, “To ask me to substitute you by some one in my judgment more fit to command, or who would possess more of the confidence of the army, or of the reflecting men in the country is to demand an impossibility.” With that, Lee remained in command.

When Lee submitted his official report to the Confederate War Department on January 20, 1864, he dubbed the campaign partially successful because he had transferred the scene of hostilities beyond the Potomac River. But with a bit more self-criticism, Lee bemoaned his substantial casualties. The army’s monthly returns calculated only 45,396 men present for duty on July 31. Thus, the campaign had subtracted 34,629 men from the ranks, the largest single loss of his army to date.

In the ranks, these casualties drove some rebels to outright misery. A few days after his regiment crossed the Potomac, South Carolinian Taliaferro Simpson wrote to his aunt that, “I must confess that this is a gloomy period for the Confederacy.” Another soldier, Lieut. Alexander McNeil of the 2nd South Carolina, wrote to his wife, Almirah (whom he called “Tinie”). He said, “But Tinie, in my opinion we have made nothing yet by this campaign. We came here with the best army the Confederacy ever carried into the field but thousands of our brave boys are left upon the enemy’s soil and in my opinion the army will never be made up of such material again.” For some, Gettysburg made the dream of Confederate independence appear farther away than ever.

On the morning of July 3, Pvt. George W. Warner of the 20th Connecticut was struck by friendly fire from Union artillery at Culp's Hill. An exploding shell fragment tore off Warner's right arm just below the shoulder joint, while another fragment struck his left forearm, shattering it. Within an hour of being hit, Warner received two amputations. Warner lived to age ninety-two. This photograph depicts him with his family. They are (left to right): Ettie, George Jr., Catherine (wife), Ruby (infant), Alice, George Sr. (amputee), Charles, and William (seated). (Library of Congress)

But not every Confederate soldier felt so despondent, and true to Davis's prediction, few, if any, lost faith in Lee. On July 20, Lieut. Col. William G. Delony wrote to his wife that he still prayed to the heavens for a second Robert E. Lee: "God grant he may be preserved for us for without him I believe I should almost despair." Delony did not fear defeat. After learning about the New York City draft riots, he became convinced that the northern war effort was hanging by a thread. He concluded that, "it seems to be a never ending struggle full of trials and unmitigated suffering but the end to be achieved promises so much of happiness to the survivors and our children that courage & confidence take new root in my heart." Delony's opinion probably represented the majority opinion within the Army of Northern Virginia. The defeat at Gettysburg wounded Confederate morale, but it came nowhere close to infecting it with defeatism.

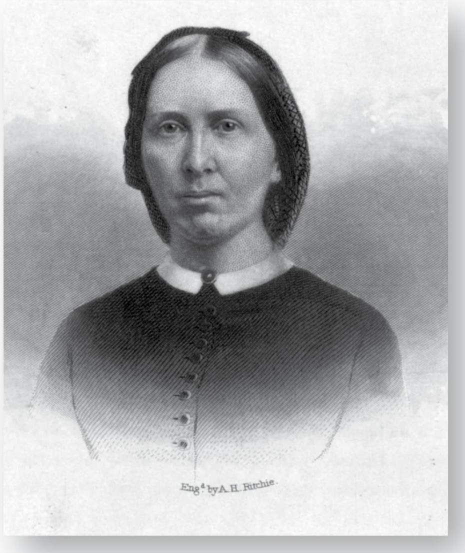
Lydia Ziegler was the thirteen-year-old daughter of the Lutheran Seminary caretakers. On July 1, her family fled the scene of combat. When they returned to their home, they found it had been robbed of nearly all possessions and that all the buildings on the Seminary grounds were being utilized as hospitals. She later remembered: “The dying and the dead were all around us—men and beasts. We could count as high as twenty dead horses lying side by side. Imagine, if you can, the stench of one dead animal lying in the hot July sun for days. Here they were by the hundreds… Oh, what a home-coming! Everything we owned was gone—not a bed to lie on, and not a change of clothing.” (Adams County Historical Society, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania)

As Lee stabilized his reputation, the battle’s victor, Meade, struggled to receive acclaim. Initially, northern newspapers rejoiced, calling Meade the hero of the hour. But over time, editors moderated their views, arguing that Meade should have done more. Perhaps, they suggested, if he had been more aggressive on July 12–13, he could have ended the war. In late October, the *New York Herald* asserted:

> When the rebel army, last July, was arrested at the flooded Potomac, and hemmed in there by General Meade’s victorious columns, the war would probably have been ended with that campaign had General Meade closed in with the enemy on Sunday or Monday, instead of waiting till Tuesday. Upon that brief but inestimable day of grace—Monday—depended the capture, destruction, or dispersion of the rebel army or its salvation; but that day of grace was accorded him, and Lee, with his army, escaped.

Meade reacted poorly to public disparagement. Writing to his wife, he complained, “The *Herald* is constantly harping on the assertion that Gettysburg was fought by the corps commanders and the common soldiers, and that no generalship was displayed. I suppose after awhile it will be discovered that I was not at Gettysburg at all.” Eventually, the press broke him. In March 1864, in a cantankerous letter sent to the adjutant general’s office, Meade demanded the War Department retrieve his flagging reputation. “For the past fortnight,” he wrote, “the public press of the whole country has been teeming with articles, all having for their object assaults upon my reputation as an officer, and tending to throw discredit upon my operations at Gettysburg and my official report of the same name.” Attaching an example of an obnoxious article, Meade suggested that someone commence an investigation to see who might be behind the conspiracy to injure his character.

The War Department did not initiate any widespread investigation of the press, nor did it provide Meade with any support when the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War called him in for questioning. However, Meade survived the landslide of public criticism, and Lincoln retained him as commander of the Army of the Potomac. Union soldiers offered a diversity of opinion concerning Meade’s leadership. Some contended that Meade had exercised unwarranted caution at Williamsport; others claimed that he had made the right move by staying put. Regardless, Meade’s decision ensured that the war in the East would go on, and every Union soldier knew that, in the next engagement, Lee’s army would take up the tactical defensive, which would make it harder to assail. In mid-July, one New York soldier wrote home, “Lee’s escape has no doubt for the present saved many lives for us, but I fear that in a very few days we will have to face the rebels again and perhaps under different circumstances. For I fear Lee will have his accustomed ground to fight on, where our reduced army will have to attack him.” As an aside, the prolongation of the war had tragic consequences for this particular soldier, Sgt. William Rennell, who was captured in 1864 and died at Andersonville.


Engd by A. H. Ritchie

Harriet Dada of Syracuse, New York, traveled to Gettysburg in early July and served as a volunteer nurse at the 12th Corps field hospital and later at Camp Letterman. Daily, she ministered to the wants of the dying. On July 17, she lost a patient, Sgt. William H. Blunt of the 2nd Massachusetts, who had been shot in the neck and thigh on July 3. That morning, after speaking with Dada about living in a “better land and [a] brighter home,” Blunt asked, “I want you to pray for me when you pray.” Promising she would, she returned a half-hour later only to be told by an attending surgeon that an artery had hemorrhaged and Blunt had bled to death. In 1884, Dada published her serial memoir, “Ministering Angels,” in the *National Tribune*, recounting the story of Blunt and many other Gettysburg patients in her care. (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; gift in honor of Mayme Burrill, R.N. and Mary Patricia Des Roches, R.N.)

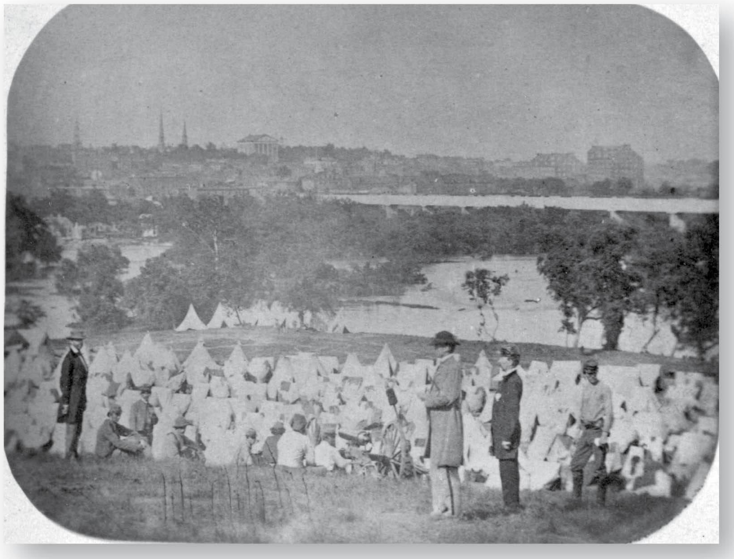
In the short term, the two armies had to deal with the battle’s tragic aftermath. For one, the Army of the Potomac had taken 5,150 unwounded enemy prisoners. Union provost guards marched the gray-clad column to Westminster, Maryland, where they took trains to Baltimore. From there, the federals distributed the prisoners among fourteen camps. A sizable contingent chose to leave their prison camps by taking an Oath of Allegiance, forswearing any adherence to the Confederacy. In fact, the War Department raised portions of six regiments from Confederate defectors and sent them off to the west to fight against the Lakota. Although prison life invariably involved hardship, in some ways, Confederate soldiers experienced a profitable incarceration. At Point Lookout, Maryland, which provided inmates with only rude shelters, the guards enforced strict protocols for cleanliness. During Point Lookout’s first six months of operation, the prison population experienced a lower mortality rate than a standard military garrison. So remembered a camp guard stationed there, “they [the rebels] were all much better provided for than when in their own army, and many of them better supplied than ever before in their lives.”

By contrast, Union prisoners experienced harsher privation. At battle’s end, 5,182 had been captured by the Army of Northern Virginia, and now they had to participate in that army’s challenging retreat. The column of Union prisoners trudged at least fifteen miles per day merely to reach the Potomac River, often without rations and with little time for sleep. One Union prisoner, Lieut. Albert Wallber, likened the trek to a death march. He recollected, “But no rest was given us… We were driven to Williamsport on the Potomac, yes, driven, for if any one dropped behind, either sick or tired, a stab with the bayonet, accompanied by an oath, would cause the unintentional straggler to master his weakness and move on.”

After crossing, the Union prisoners marched through Winchester, Strasburg, Harrisonburg, and Staunton—another 115 miles. At Staunton, they boarded boxcars, about 800 at a time, and these vehicles took them to Richmond. The Confederates confined enlisted prisoners on Belle Isle, inside a two-acre enclosure on an island in the James River. Meanwhile, Union officers went to Libby Prison, a tobacco warehouse at the foot of Twentieth Street along the shores of the James River. Dank, smelly, overcrowded, and full of rats, Libby represented an emotional hell as much as a physical one. From his prison cell, one Union inmate recalled seeing children romping and playing near the river. Reflecting on the absurdity of his condition—how he had become a prisoner of war inside the enemy capital—he wrote, “Truly: joy and sorrow, good and evil, how near grow they to one another in the vale of human life! The passers-by on the pave below, with what indifference they glance up at the pale faces that peer out between the bars!”

For the wounded, their suffering lasted beyond the chronology of the war itself. Gettysburg caused 26,700 men to fall with treatable wounds, including 6,739 Confederate soldiers who had to be left behind in Union care. By battle’s end, nearly every building within a four-mile radius hosted at least one wounded soldier. Slowly but surely, Union ambulances began concentrating the wounded along a cluster of farms near White Run, four miles southeast of the borough. Care for the wounded proved challenging. Heavy rain required the hospital attendants to move sufferers from floods and a shortage of available surgeons made it impossible to perform procedures on all critically wounded patients.

Nevertheless, treatment proceeded round the clock for weeks, and as patients' conditions improved, they were transported to railheads to be sent to general hospitals in Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York City. Also, a general hospital opened up in Gettysburg. On July 22, the Army of the Potomac's medical director, Dr. Jonathan Letterman, established a massive tent-city two miles east of Gettysburg that became known as "Camp Letterman." Operating for four months, it housed approximately 4,000 patients.



The Confederates took captured Union enlisted men to Belle Isle, a fifty-four-acre island in the middle of the James River. Inmates lived inside an enclosed breastwork, two acres in size. Several artillery pieces sat atop a rise to ensure the inmates did not stage a mass breakout. So wrote one prisoner, "Every hour spent there was one of suffering, and I longed—God only knows how anxiously to get away." (Library of Congress)

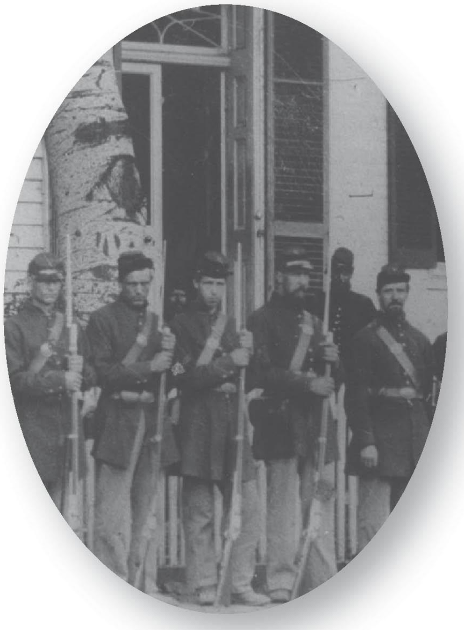
The overworked army doctors received critical assistance from two national relief organizations, the U.S. Sanitary Commission and the U.S. Christian Commission, which donated countless items and all the necessary manpower and womanpower to keep the field hospitals in operation. The Sanitary Commission operated a lodge near Gettysburg's depot, equipped with two large stoves and four boilers, which allowed the agents to supply soup and coffee to the wounded who arrived there expecting transportation to Baltimore. Twice a day, for three weeks, the Sanitary Commission agents loaded over 350 wounded men onto boxcars for their trip to the general hospitals until over 16,000 men had been transported. All the while, the agents fed the hungry, dressed bandages, purchased clean clothes for those who had soiled uniforms, and buried those who died before their trains arrived. “No men were turned back,” wrote agent Georgianna Woolsey. “You fed and you sheltered them just when no one else could have done so.”

On July 22, the Army of the Potomac’s medical director, Dr. Jonathan Letterman, opened a U.S. general hospital on the grounds of the George Wolf farm, northeast of Gettysburg. The camp consisted of 108 tents for patients. By mid-August 1863, approximately 1,400 patients occupied these tents. Here, patients, nurses, volunteer doctors, and army medical staff pose in front of Camp Letterman’s Ward L. (Library of Congress)

Approximately 3,000 wounded men never recovered, dying of their injuries inside the field hospitals. For the abandoned Confederate soldiers, death proved especially lonely. From their perspective, they were dying in a foreign land with no friend nearby. Twenty-nine-year-old Pvt. William L. Nichols of the 1st Maryland (C.S.) Battalion had been wounded during the attack against Culp’s Hill. The only sympathetic voice during Nichols’s final hour was a member of the U.S. Christian Commission. On July 24, Nichols wrote his last letter to his older sister, Harriet Holden Strayhorn of Hillsborough, North Carolina:

> I am lying here severly wounded. I received my wound in the 2nd day's fight at Gettysburg. Was wounded in my left leg, below and through the knee. This is my 22nd day and my wounds do not seem to heal fast. I feel that my race is about run. I am happy to say that I do not fear death, I have been endeavoring to "making my peace with God." Today I was baptized by Rev. Mr. Price, a member of the "U.S. Christian Commission." My grave, I suppose will be near a barn or house of Mrs. Weibles, 2 miles from Gettysburg. O that we may meet in heaven.

Nichols lived one more week, dying on July 31. Workers at Camp Letterman Hospital consigned his remains to a temporary cemetery constructed solely for deceased patients.



On Independence Day afternoon, the 2nd U.S. Sharpshooters lost three men killed at Peter Rogers's farm. Among those killed was Corp. William Cornelius Beard, a twenty-two-year-old Dartmouth College student (third from left). After dark, amid a driving thunderstorm, a squad from Beard's regiment carried his corpse to a secluded spot on Cemetery Ridge and buried it in a shallow grave. So remembered one of the burial party, "Never was there a more weird funeral and burial ever done, for through the time of the whole proceeding there was a continuous shower and terrific thunder and lightning." In December 1863, Beard's family moved his remains to New Boston Cemetery in New Hampshire. (U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center)

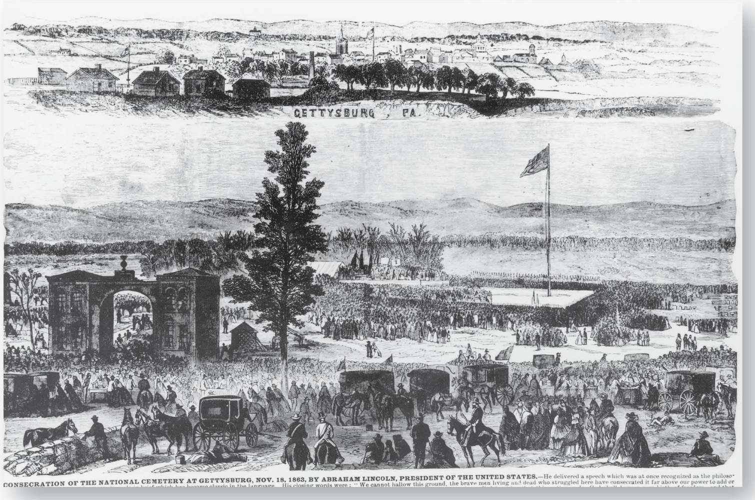
Not all human remains had it so lucky. Many went unburied for days, festering in the summer air. On July 5, a New Hampshire soldier returned to where his regiment had fought on July 2, finding piles of unburied men, blue and gray alike. Writing to his fiancée, he said, "Such a sight I never wish to see again. The men had turned black, their eyes were swollen out of their heads and they were twice their natural size. The stench of the field was awful. Dead men were as thick as you may well believe." If bodies could be identified, the soldiers commenced burial, placing the corpses into shallow graves, and if they could manage it, they constructed temporary markers. On July 3, Sgt. James Wright of the 1st Minnesota collected a small squad, equipped them with shovels, and located the body of Sgt. Philip Hamlin. They wrapped Hamlin in a piece of tent, dug a shallow trench, and lowered his body into it. Then, the burial squad held a moment of silence. Sgt. Wright remembered, "I do not now recall that a word was spoken, but it was a sincere and reverential service fitting the time and the situation. Then we covered him over with the dirt and the stones we had thrown out of the trench and placed at his head a board, on which his name, company and regiment had been marked."

All across the battlefield, these scenes repeated themselves, but only until July 6, when the Union army departed in pursuit. Thankfully, a few days later, a militia regiment, the 51st Pennsylvania Militia, arrived to assist in the clean-up. And quite a clean-up it was. As far as the eye could see, the farmland was ruined, crops trampled, fences torn apart, trees riddled with shot, dead animals and men unburied, flies feasting on carcasses. The town and surrounding countryside looked like the very picture of hell. An Indiana soldier wrote to his sister, "I have seen a great many hard battles but I believe Gittysyburg [*sic*] was the most desperate sight I ever saw. On the right where our regt fought, dead rebbs lay almost as thick as leaves on the ground and in all shapes, mangled in all kinds of sights … I hope I may never experience more such days while I live."

Every day, the battlefield endangered the roving populace because unexploded ordnance continued to burst. Some of these detonations occurred when farmers struck the ordnance with their plows or shovels, but most happened when civilians attempted to claim discarded ordnance as souvenirs. In January 1865, the Eshleman children of Fairfield recovered a rifle from the July 3 skirmish. Their mother allowed the three boys (aged eleven, nine, and seven) to play with the weapon as a toy, not realizing it was still loaded. One day, the boys heated the gun by placing it inside the family stove. This cooked off the round, firing it through seven-year-old Frederick Eshleman's head, killing him instantly. Currently, no conclusive record of civilian casualties from Gettysburg exists. Only one citizen—

Jennie Wade—had been killed outright during the battle's three days, but in the ensuing months, an unknown number of others died from accidental encounters with discarded weaponry.

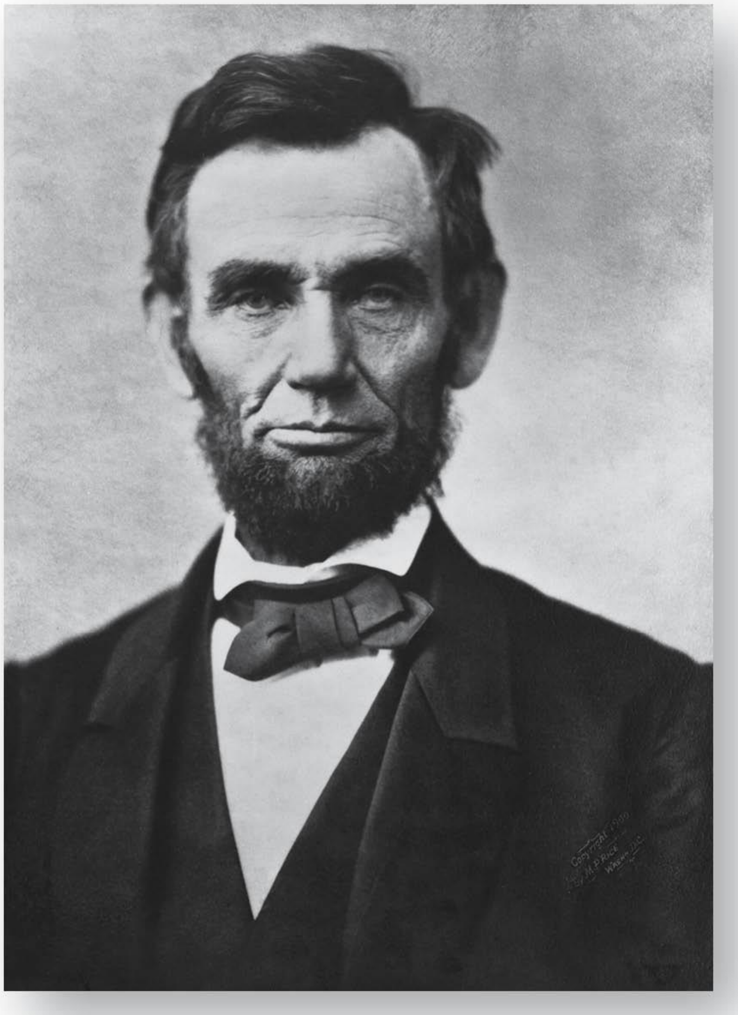
The town also had to host hundreds of families who came seeking the bodies of their loved ones. On July 24, Joseph Foster of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, arrived in Gettysburg to claim the body of his friend, Sgt. Henry Richards, who had died at the 3rd Corps hospital. Foster remembered the journey to find Richards as the saddest experience of his life. Everywhere, he saw friends and family wandering the fields. "Sometimes they are successful," he wrote, "but often their search is in vain, and they have not even the mournful satisfaction of giving their dear one the last sad marks of love and respect." Foster conversed with one man who confessed that he had dug up eight corpses before he finally found the one for which he was searching, the body of his son. Foster felt fortunate because Richards's grave had been carefully buried by his comrades, labeled, and instructions for finding it meticulously recorded. For most, the journey to claim loved ones started in false leads or ended in failure.


GETTYSBURG, PA.
CONSECRATION OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY AT GETTYSBURG, NOV. 18, 1863, BY ABRAHAM LINCOLN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.—He delivered a speech which was at once recognized as the philoso-

Illustrator Joseph Becker rendered his image of the November 19, 1863, National Cemetery dedication. The Evergreen Cemetery can be seen at far left. The gatehouse arch, crowded by spectators, is at center-left. The speaker's platform, upon which Lincoln stood, can be seen at middle distance. It is just to the right of a tent and is supporting men who are holding placards. The first set of Union burials can be seen at far right. (Fotosearch/Getty Images)

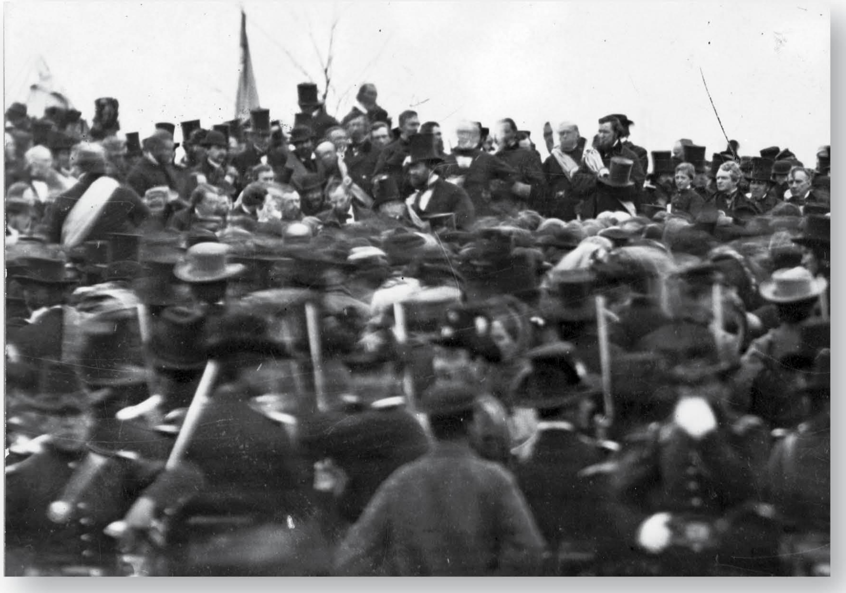
Most of the Union army’s killed-in-action did not return home. Gettysburg became the permanent residence for their earthly remains. At first, Elizabeth Thorn—the wife of the Evergreen Cemetery’s caretaker—attempted to bury the dead within the town’s plot. Despite being six months pregnant, she and her elderly father buried about a hundred corpses on their own. Eventually, Pennsylvania’s government stepped in to assist. David Wills, a local attorney, wrote to Governor Andrew Curtin, suggesting the Commonwealth purchase a separate plot for Union soldiers. Wills made the purchase on Pennsylvania’s behalf, acquiring seventeen acres, which eventually became known as the Soldiers’ National Cemetery. Assisted by funding from other states, Wills paid a team of gravediggers under direction of Samuel Weaver to scour the battlefield, identify all the Union graves, and reinter the corpses inside the new cemetery. From October 17, 1863, to March 18, 1864, Weaver’s team worked tirelessly, moving 3,512 bodies into their new graves. This number included a mix of Union soldiers killed outright (either partially or completely identified), Union soldiers who had died in hospital, and over 900 unidentified remains, some of whom may have been Confederates. Meanwhile, the 3,903 Confederate dead remained on the field for the next decade, exhumed by Confederate remembrance organizations in the 1870s.

The official consecration of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery occurred on November 19, 1863. At 9.30 a.m., a procession marched south along Baltimore Street and up to the summit of Cemetery Hill, where 15,000 spectators clustered around a wooden speakers platform. The procession included six state governors, three members of Lincoln’s cabinet, and Lincoln himself. After two musical performances and a prayer, Edward Everett (ex-governor of Massachusetts, ex-U.S. Senator, and ex-Secretary of State) delivered a two-hour oration. After a hymn, Lincoln arose to deliver the dedicatory address. Three weeks earlier, Wills had invited Lincoln to come to Gettysburg and “set apart these grounds to their sacred use by a few appropriate remarks.” Lincoln leaped at the chance. For months, he had been pondering how to summarize the political meaning of the war, and the invitation to speak offered him the ideal venue to put his thoughts into coherent prose.



On November 2, Abraham Lincoln received an invitation to speak at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery. He accepted, even though another man, Edward Everett, was the featured speaker. When Everett congratulated Lincoln on the success of his speech, Lincoln replied with modesty, hinting that he was not entirely pleased with it. (Library of Congress)

Even before his election, Lincoln had reached a philosophical conclusion about America. It must be judged, not by the glory of its wealth nor by the expansion of its borders, but by its ability to uphold its founding promise. In 1776, the architects of the Declaration of Independence had declared that the U.S. government would defend the truth that "all men are created equal." To Lincoln, this concept constituted America's most redemptive quality. During a speech in 1857, Lincoln had asserted that this phrase had been inserted into the Declaration, not to effect separation from the British Empire, "but for future use." The Declaration's authors meant it to be, so argued Lincoln, "a stumbling block to those who in after times might seek to turn a free people back into the hateful paths of despotism." Six years earlier, prior to the rebellion, such words did not resound strongly, but now, after the Army of the Potomac's mighty sacrifice at Gettysburg, Lincoln deemed it time to repeat his message. After eighty-seven years of protecting slavery, the United States must now inaugurate a new birth of freedom. If the nation failed to accomplish this, the deaths of these U.S. soldiers would have been in vain.



Only a few photographs depict Lincoln delivering the Gettysburg Address, and this image is the clearest. Lincoln can be seen sitting down, bareheaded, face partially blurred, in the center. The tall man with heavy beard, top hat, and sash, who stands just to the right of Lincoln, is Ward Hill Lamon, a close friend of Lincoln who introduced him. Behind Lamon and slightly to the right, face blurred, is Edward Everett, the keynote speaker. At far right, with a wisp of hair across his forehead, is Governor David Tod of Ohio. To the left of Tod is Governor Andrew Curtin of Pennsylvania. (Library of Congress)

There are five versions of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, all slightly different. These are the words of the fifth version (the so-called "Bliss Copy"). They are not the exact words that Lincoln spoke on November 19, but they represent Lincoln’s most polished iteration of the address, the only one to which he signed his name:

> Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.
>
> Abraham Lincoln.

The Battle of Gettysburg may not have represented a turning point in the Civil War’s military drama, but thanks to Lincoln’s words, the battle became a watershed in America’s fight for equality. Gettysburg’s legacy remains a priceless treasure that all Americans share, and to the 5,200 U.S. soldiers who gave their lives at Gettysburg (or died of their wounds in the months following), we, the living, should be profoundly grateful.

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Steve Noon has been a professional artist since 1985. He has had a life-long passion for both painting and history and has provided award-winning illustrations for the publishers Dorling Kindersley. With a keen interest in military history, Steve has illustrated over 80 books for Osprey. He lives and works in Cardiff, Wales.

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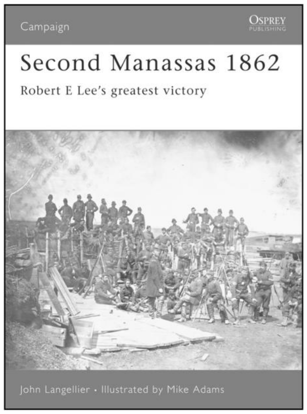
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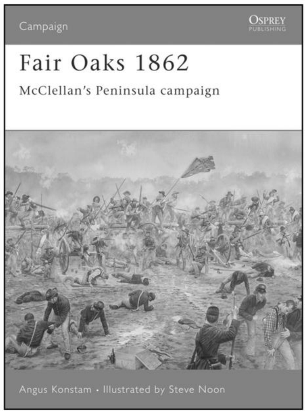
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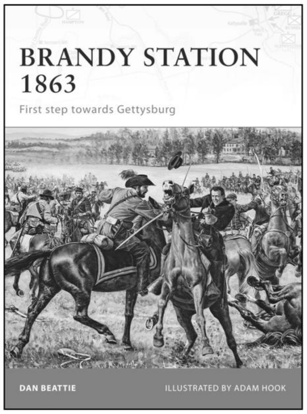
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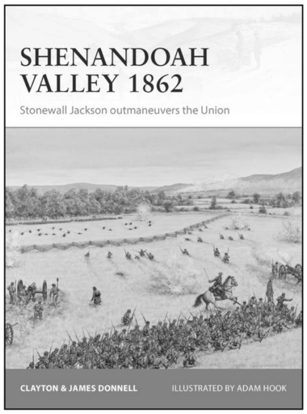
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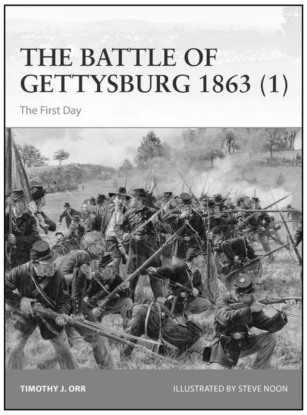
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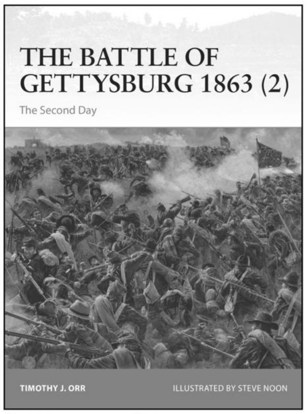
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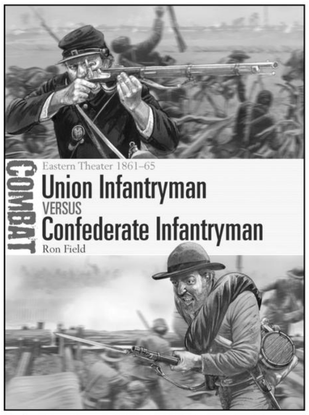
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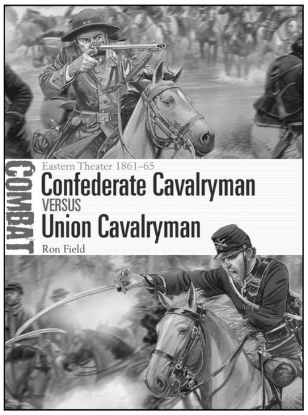
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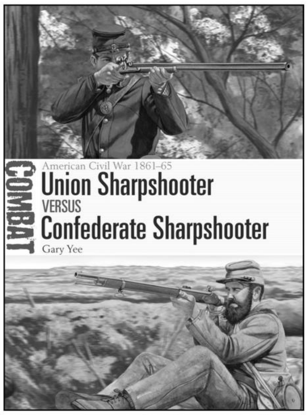
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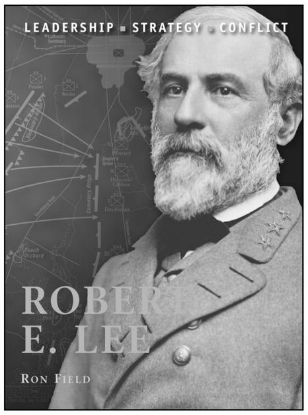
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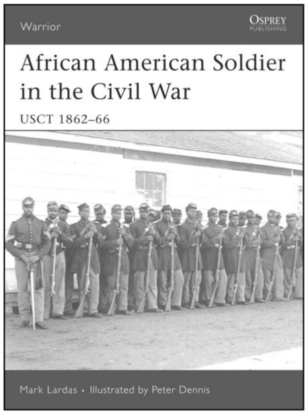
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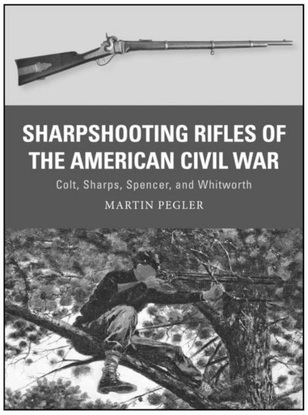
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